AN

# Occasional Discourse,

*Concerning*

GOD'S

FORE-KNOWLEDGE,

And

MAN'S

FREE-AGENCY.

*Being an Attempt to reconcile their seeming Opposition, and to assert the Truth of both from the H. Scriptures.*

LONDON,

Printed in the YEAR 1687.

# The PREFACE.

IF in the peruſal of this ſmall Tract, the Reader finds but ſmall Satifaction, I hope he will not much wonder at it, when he remembers, that larger Volumns, and even learned ones too, in matters eſpecially of this nature, do not always anſwer expectation. I pretend to no great ſhare of Learning, nor any large meaſure of acute Judgement: only I am naturally diſpos'd to thinking and conſideration; and upon the occaſion mentioned at the Entrance of the inſueing diſcourſe, which is no fictitious pretence, but a thing that did really happen about two years ago, I took a fancy to ſet down my thoughts upon this abſtruſe ſubject. Some few that have ſeen it in Manuſcript, have thought it to be tolerable ſenſe, and might perhaps be a further occaſion to ſome Man of better Parts, to ſpeak more clearly to the point, for which cauſe I am not unwilling to permit it's Publication: for I believe the ſubject has not been hitherto exhauſted; and I deſire nothing more than to be out-done, or even confuted, by any one

that can make things more coherent, and better vindicate the Divine Attributes.

In the mean time,* I have met with a Curious Diſcourſe concerning things above Reaſon, amongſt which the ſubject here treated of, is mention'd as one; By which I perceive, that this Eſſay of mine is not impertinent, tho' perhaps it may be ineffectual, and come far ſhort of the deſign. For how can an unlearned head (by never ſo much thinking) think to bring that under Reaſon, which ſo great a Wit hath ranked among things above it? So that the importance of the Attempt will not (I fear) account for the ill management of it: Yet it's Innocency will (I hope) defend it from any heavy Cenſure. If I have not wholly ſubdu'd my Province unto Reaſon, yet I have given it a kind of negative Voice; that is, tho' Reaſon cannot abſolutely command the Affirmative, it ſhall nevertheleſs ſo far rule the Oppoſer, as to prevent his Negative. Some things muſt be granted, tho' perhaps not without difficulty, becauſe they cannot be deny'd without far greater inconvenience.

If

* *By a Fellow of the R. S.*

If it be ſaid, We cannot underſtand how any thing can be certain, and yet contingent; or how a voluntary action can be foreſeen, which depends upon free choice, and that at any time until it be effected, may be either done or let alone. Let ſuch perſons try how they can clear the inconveniences of an ignorant and imperfect Deity, which will lie hard upon them if they grant not Divine preſcience. On the other ſide, let them ſee with what ſucceſs they can take away diſtributive Juſtice, and root out the Notion and Exiſtence of good and evil; which task is of Neceſſity incumbent on them that deny Man to be a Free Agent. If things to come be not foreſeen, what will become of Divine providence? If there be not in Man a free Election, where is ſin? for where there is no choice, how can any one chooſe amiſs? To chaſtiſe my child for diſobedience, would be all one as to whip my clock for going amiſs. Either God Almighty foreſees things future, or he cannot be God: Either Man is a voluntary Agent, or he cannot be Man. If theſe things therefore will not ſtand together, Reaſon it ſelf may ſeem impertinent, and it's natural Concluſions

altogether uſeleſs: For, to what purpoſe is Diſcourſe or Ratiocination, when either there can be no Tranſgreſſion, or none to take notice of it, and puniſh it?

Theſe are the inconveniences which men run the hazard of in this matter: For rather than admit one apparent difficulty, which conſiſts perhaps only in the narrowneſs of humane underſtanding, they chooſe to fill the World with Contradiction and Abſurdity. Some will venture to mix Heaven and Earth together, under a State of War and Rapine, without any ſenſe of Divine Authority to awe Rebellious Mankind: and others will attempt to turn God out of the World, becauſe they cannot comprehend his perfections and operations. But ſurely it is not adviſable to caſhier every thing that puts a ſtreſs upon our limitted faculties, nor run down all thoſe things for falſe, which conſiſt not well with what we apprehend to be true. To which purpoſe the Diſcourſe above mentioned contains a parcel of the nobleſt Inſtances, apply'd and manag'd with the greateſt clearneſs, and to the higheſt Ends and Advantage, of any book I have hitherto met with. From thence I gladly learn,

that

that there are certain Privileg'd things; which will by no means ſtoop to Common Reaſon, nor accommodate themſelves to thoſe Rules and Meaſures which are ſufficient for other Matters. Not but that there is a peculiar ſort of Reaſon in theſe alſo: for tho' they are above my reaſon to apprehend them fully, yet I apprehend very good reaſon, why they ſhould be ſo. For, either my Capacity is bounded, or it is not; if it be, 'tis ſure to be over-power'd in graſping an unlimitted thing; if not, it muſt then be infinite: and ſince I know many Capacities about the ſame Level with mine own, and not a few incomparably greater, it muſt follow, that, not only a multitude of infinites are conſiſtent, but a Number alſo of capacities, each of which is more than infinite; which concluſion I think is more than ſufficiently abſurd. Beſides, ſince God cannot do what is inconſiſtent, or involves a contradiction, he could not create a power, or faculty, comprehenſive of his own perfections; for that could be no leſs than infinite: he cannot parcel out his peculiar Attributes unto his Creatures; for that would imply a contradiction.

Wherefore the moſt ſhallow Reaſon may conclude, there muſt of neceſſity be thoſe things, which the moſt refined Wit cannot adequately comprehend.

And this is ſo, not only in reference to the Divine perfections, but in things alſo of a lower Nature, of which it may not be improper to inſert one inſtance in this place, whereby an undeniable truth will appear to be attended with unaccountable difficulty. For the inſueing Diſcourſe pretends not to anſwer all the Cavils that may be made againſt a Meridian truth, which yet (like the Sun it ſelf) hath ſome obſcurities: muchleſs doth it undertake to make men ſee, who are either blind or ſhut their eyes. But the deſign of it is, to aſſert from the Scriptures, the truth of Divine preſcience, and of voluntary Election; to evince the neceſſity of admitting them both; to accommodate the ſeeming oppoſition, and to point out ſome of thoſe unconcluding arguments, that miſlead men to apprehend an inconſiſtence where there is none. But in caſe I have not performed this with ſufficient ſtrength and clearneſs of expreſſion, it will not be foreign to the matter in hand, to ſhew by an in-

inſtance, that ſome things may not only be true, but are almoſt univerſally acknowledg'd, which yet how they can be ſo, is inſuperably hard to be conceived.

And this ſhall be an inſtance which doth frequently occur to every one that is converſant about Decimal Numbers: ſcarce any good Accomptant but underſtands, no learned man but will acknowledge the force of it. For you may have a ſmall fraction, ſuppoſe of a farthing or of a barley corn, not worth demanding, which yet cannot be deny'd to be infinitely deviſible; inſomuch, that going about to find ſome determinate part of ſuch a fraction, as ½, ¼, or the like, you may indeed divide it according to Decimal Arithmetick, and you ſhall preſently come near the truth, and the further you continue your diviſion, you ſhall ſtill come the nearer: but though you divide it everlaſtingly, you ſhall never be able to get out intirely the part you aim at, but the quotient will ſtill be defective, and ſomething will for ever remain of the Dividend.

To make out this the more evidently, I put the following Caſe for an Example:

seven Workemen are to receive for some piece of work 20$^{s}$ to be equally divided amongst them; and supposing my self to be one of the seven, I demand my share; but first I am to compute what it comes to. To do this, I make use of Decimals, which in many questions are very expeditious, and much in use at this day. It is no more but only to divide 20 by 7: but since there is a remainder, I add Cyphers to the Dividend, and so continuing the Division to four places. I find in the Quotient this mixt Number 2.8.5.7. which comes to 2$^{s}$ 10$^{d}$ 19, and something more, which is a solution exact enough for common practise.

20 (2,85.7
14
60
56
40
35
50
49
1

But this is not all; for there remains one of the dividend, that is to say, one thousandth part of a Shilling, and of this I demand $\frac{1}{7}$, to make up my full proportion of the 20$^{s}$. I therefore still proceed to divide, in order to get out my seventh part exactly: but I shall never be able to do it; no, though the division were to be continued from Age to Age for one thousand years, and after that for another, yet still the Quotient would be too little, and the dividend inexhaustible.

In

In this plain and familiar queſtion, reſolv'd by Decimals, three things are evident. 1. That in a few minutes time an anſwer may be given, tho' not exact, yet ſufficiently true for common uſe: that is to ſay, in half an hour at moſt, I may ſafely aver it, that ſo much is my full ſhare, within leſs than one Millioneth part of a farthing; and yet at the ſame time, I may be ſworn, that the ſame is not my proportion exactly.

2. Let me continue the diviſion as far, and as long as I pleaſe, I ſhall come nearer ſtill and nearer to the truth, and every new figure in the Quotient adds ſomething to my ſhare, which I had not before; it leſſens the dividend and approaches by various (or rather infinite) degrees nearer to $\frac{1}{5}$, which is the proportion aimed at: but

3. It can never be accompliſht; Myriads of Ages would not ſuffice to drain this Fountain. You may ſuppoſe (if you pleaſe) the Quotient to be extended in decimal fractions, as far as from the Arctic to the Antarctic Pole; all that would not reach a true ſeventh part, tho' every figure (as I ſaid) advance ſomething towards it.

Let us now lay all this together: here is a Mark to be hit, as ſuppoſe it were a Jack lying in a bouling-alley, you may aime at it, and preſently come within a hair's breadth, your Boul may be ſtill in motion, and every moment come nearer to the Mark, and yet ſhall never touch it.

This Example in Arithmetick ſeems to conclude no leſs, than thoſe two other Noted curioſities in Geometry, concerning the Hyperbole and Diagonal, and has a reſpective affinity to them both. For whereas the Hyperbole, may have ſuch a Relation to a right line drawn near it, that both being prolonged, it ſhall come nearer and nearer unto the ſaid right Line; yet how far ſoever both lines be extended, they ſhall never meet: this is very nearly reſembled in the caſe before us. And whereas it is impoſſible to aſſign any common Meaſure for the Side and Diagonal of a Square, which ſhall exactly meaſure them both, but there will remain a part of the one line, leſs than the ſaid Common Meaſure, after you have made that as little as you pleaſe: So here, it is impoſſible to exhauſt Decimal Numbers by ſevens, becauſe that 7. and 10. (or any number

number consisting of 1. with the Addition of Cyphers) are so far incommensurable, that nothing above an Unit can be a Common Measure to them both. To conclude, from this plain and familiar instance, may be inferred the endless divisibility of matter, that the parts of any thing exceed the whole, and that the whole Globe of Earth is no further divisible, nor cannot be said to contain a greater Number of parts, than one small grain of Sand.

Now if there be such a Mysterious depth in lines and numbers, such a boundless Abyss in any small particle of Earth or Clay, that the Wit of Man cannot comprehend it, what shall we say of him that made all things in Number, Weight and Measure? How can we excuse the audacious folly of pretending to measure Eternity by the unequal Standard of our Judgement, or circumscribe infinity within the narrow Circle of Humane Capacity? Wherefore if the Reader shall dislike the following Discourse, and the Reasons therein made use of, let him for his own satisfaction (and for mine too, if he please) bethink himself of better, and therein he may do a piece of service, both useful and

acceptable. But for any one to confine the ineffable perfections of the Supreme Being to his own faculties (or rather fancies) whilſt in the mean time he cannot give an adequate Account of himſelf, nor of any thing almoſt that is about him, he will find, at laſt, to be a piece of egregious vanity, and an undertaking altogether deſperate.

---

An

An occasional

# DISCOURSE,

Concerning

GOD'S FORE-KNOWLEDGE

and

MAN'S FREE-AGENCY.

I Happened a while ago, to be present at a Discourse between two Gentlemen, concerning the fatal Period of Mans life, or the fixed certainty of future Events: the one affirming it, from the consideration of Gods Foreknowledge; the other denying it, from the evident certainty of Mans Free-will. The former urged; what God Foresees, cannot but come to pass: the latter pleaded, Man cannot choose, nor refuse, the doing of that, which is certain to be done. I thought there was truth in what they both grounded their arguments upon, but certain inferences, pretended to be drawn from

from thence, which this Diſcourſe produced, I could by no means approve of. I did therefore interpoſe a little for an accommodation, but with ſo ill ſucceſs, that I have a mind to try, if I can do any better in this Paper. Not that I will preſume to moderate betwixt two Perſons, each of them better learned, and of far greater abilities than my ſelf. But ſince their Diſcourſe hath ſo fix'd the ſubject in my mind, that I cannot eaſily remove it, I will only attempt to clear the Notion a little to my own apprehenſion, by ſetting my thoughts in ſome kind of order in reference to this matter. I ſhall therefore endeavour theſe three things.

1. To aſſert from Scripture, that God foreſees future events; and that nevertheleſs, Man is a free and voluntary Agent.

2. To ſhew, how theſe two things agree together; and detect the fallacy of thoſe Reaſonings that repreſent them inconſiſtent.

3. To anſwer ſome of thoſe Objections, that are wont to occur in this Debate.

I begin with the firſt, and eaſieſt part of my Task, namely, to aſſert Gods Fore-knowledge, and Mans Free Will, out of the Scri-

Scriptures. Theſe are indeed two ſeveral ſubjects, and might challenge each of them a diſtinct Head of Diſcourſe: yet I rather choſe to manage them both in one, by linking Scriptures together in ſuch ſort, that of each couple, the one ſhall make out Divine Preſcience, and the other Humane Freedom; and being conſider'd together, ſhall evince, that both theſe have oft-times been converſant about the ſame particular event: that is, one Text ſhall prove Gods Fore-knowledge *of*, and another ſhall evidence Mans Freedom *in* doing or refuſing the ſame individual Action.

But firſt, that I may clear my way as much as I can, I muſt explain the Terms, or give ſome account, at leaſt, how I underſtand them. Some indeed except againſt the word Preſcience, and tell us, that God doth not properly fore-ſee any thing, ſince he beholdeth all things as preſent; but this I count is Criticiſm without Neceſſity; for the word is frequently uſed, as 'tis taken in this Diſcourſe, and is proper enough with reſpect unto us, and to ſuch things as are not yet in being. What ſhall be a thouſand years hence, is indeed poten-

tentially in God, but not yet actually existent: So that his knowledge of such things, is not unfitly called Prescience, as also the respect and consideration of somewhat that is distant, is called Providence. Now as Gods Omnipotence did virtually comprehend from Eternity, all the Creatures that were to be produced in Time; So his Omniscience gives him an entire View and Prospect of all their actions. They cannot act but by a power derived from him; how then should they do any thing unknown to him? He knows what himself will bring to pass in spite of all opposition; and he knows what Latitude he will allow his Creatures in their actions. Since therefore God almighty knows his own Will, and since Nothing can ever come to pass without his Will, either positive or permissive; it must follow, that he sees and knows all things and events, which are to come, and not yet actually existent, with equall certainty as if they were present. And this is what I mean by Divine Prescience.

I must now fix my Notion of Free-will, and herein I shall carefully avoid all School Controversies about it, or about Common

mon and Efficacious Grace: as also those Dominican Fancies about a thing they call * *Next Power*, which is next to none, and Sufficient Grace, which some think altogether insufficient. These and such like questions I leave to be beaten into Atoms between the Jesuites and Jansenists.

And whereas some contend, that it is in every Mans power to do what the Gospel enjoyns: For should God require of any man what is impossible to be done by him, he must needs appear to be a hard Master.

Others deny that any man can, or ever will effectually believe and repent without special Grace, which wherever it comes, makes a thorow work of Conversion in the heart, and therefore can never be lost, nor the person in whom it is finally miscarry.

Others again say, there is a sufficiency of Grace, which with pious endeavours will bring a Man to happiness, yet under a possibility of Apostatizing, in which case God may and doth sometimes relinquish the Person to final destruction.

And others, to name no more, say, there is a Common Grace or Universal Talent

* *Prov. Letters.*

Talent given to all Men, which tho' of it ſelf, it is by no means ſufficient, yet upon a conſcientious improvement thereof, with earneſt Prayer for further daily Supplies, it will pleaſe God to beſtow ſuch a Meaſure, as ſhall be ſufficient to Salvation; whilſt thoſe who were intruſted with the ſame ſtock, having laid it up in a Napkin, are through their own default, utterly ruin'd. Yet they add withal, that there are a certain Number, more peculiarly called *the Elect*, whom Efficacious Grace does ſeize upon, ſome in a high Carriere of Wickedneſs, others at firſt even againſt their Will, tho' in the day of Gods almighty power, they become a willing People, to that degree, that they deſire nothing more than to lay out their lives, to ſpend and be ſpent (as S. Paul ſaid) for the advancement of that Grace and truth, whereby they are ſubdu'd and purified: But theſe (they ſay) are not the Rule and Meaſure of God's dealing with Mankind in general, but are to be look upon, as certain high and noble Inſtances of the Freeneſs and Efficacy of Divine Grace, and of God's exerciſing an Almighty Prerogative in chooſing a Raging

Per

Perſecutor, or ſome Atheiſtical Debauchee, to be made a peculiar favorite and choſen Veſſel to himſelf.

Whereas (I ſay) there are theſe (and perhaps ſome other) opinions, that are wont to fall under conſideration, when the buſineſs of Free-will is in debate; I ſhall not trouble my ſelf to determine which is beſt, nor is it material to my deſign: 'tis not impoſſible, but with a due reſpect unto perſons, times and circumſtances, there may be ſomething of truth in them all, and each of them perhaps may be good or bad, according as 'tis manag'd. Truth and Errour I look upon as Gold and Droſs: The one is a pure and ſplendid thing, but may be adulterated or abuſed, and ſeldom is without alloy; the other, tho' baſe and ignoble, contains for the moſt part ſomething of true mettal, if duly ſeparated from the reſt.

This only (under ſubmiſſion) I ſhall adventure to ſay as my own preſent thoughts about this matter, and ſo proceed, namely, that moſt men, however under a ſtate of Nature, may do much moral good, which ſhall not paſs unrewarded, and ſomething too (for ought they can know to the con-

contrary) towards acceptance with God. That many men through the Divine goodneſs ſhall be ſaved, that neither know punctually the time of their converſion, nor certainly whether they be converted or not. That few there are who attain to that compleat aſſurance, as to baniſh, at all times, all manner of dubitation. That it is all mens duty to ſeek that they may find, and to wait upon God in the uſe of thoſe means appointed by him in his Word; and we have his promiſe for ſucceſs. And, that no man can truly ſay now, or ſhall be able to plead at the laſt day, that he hath uſed his utmoſt endeavours, and found them unſucceſsful. Theſe and the like conſiderations may be ground enough for men to be doing good at preſent, and for their reliance upon the goodneſs of God for the future. But on the othet hand, ſince there is a ſpiritual as well as a fleſhly wickedneſs, and Satan is transform'd ſometimes into an Angel of Light, and leſt Man ſhould be lifted up with an apprehenſion of certain fine things that he can do; let him remember, that 'tis God who worketh in him both to will and to do of his good pleaſure; that of himſelf he

he can do nothing, and that all his righteouſneſs is but filthy raggs. And this will help to poiſe him at the Center between the two Extreams of fainting and preſuming, and will diſcover a neceſſity of an humble attendance at the Throne of Grace, that God would ſupply unto him thoſe Divine aids, and Spiritual powers, by which he may be enabled to encounter oppoſition, and find acceptance in Chriſt Jeſus.

And herein perhaps may conſiſt the narrowneſs of the way that leads to life. For one man, ſuppoſing he can do nothing acceptable to God, reſolves to take his eaſe, until the Spirit, that Wind which bloweth where it liſt, breath upon him: another thinks he is able and willing, to do all that God requires; he admires his own good-husbandry in the improvement of his Talent, and thanks God, he is not like other men. Now the way lying in the midle betwixt theſe Extremities, the leaſt ſtep towards a Carnal Liberty on the one hand, or a Phariſaical Righteouſneſs on the other, muſt needs be a deviation from the right path, as this collateral Diſcourſe is a digreſſion from what I intend. But I now return, and do ſay, that let men eſtabliſh what

what doctrine they pleaſe concerning grace, it will not import the matter in hand, ſince I ſhall confine my Notion of Free-Will to thoſe things that are on all hands acknowledged to be within Mans power, ſuppoſing only the ordinary concurrence of Gods providence thereunto.

I conſider then, that Man above other Creatures hath knowledge to judge and diſtinguiſh of things commodious or inconvenient, beneficial or noxious to him, in the concerns of his life: and it would be a ſtrange Solæciſm in Nature, if he had not the Liberty of chooſing the one, and refuſing the other. What doth it advantage a man, to know the difference between a Sheep and a Wolf, if he want the Power, or the Will, to make a benefit of the one, and avoid the miſchief of the other? Nay I do not ſee, but this might render Man of all Creatures moſt miſerable, ſince his knowledge of good could be no other to him than Gall and Bitterneſs; whilſt he finds himſelf fatally carried on to Evil. And ſuppoſe he had been alwayes predetermined to good, his knowledge of evil then had been in vain, or rather indeed it had been impoſſible; ſince Man could not have come

to

to the knowledge of Evil, but by doing it. And what could Man under a neceſſity of always doing good, ſignifie, more than a good Watch? which tho' it moves regularly, yet is it altogether involuntary, cannot do otherwiſe, knows not that it moves at all; and conſequently is incapable of praiſe or encouragement, reward or puniſhment. Thus if we take away from Man his faculties of Judging and Chooſing, we make the Lord of the Creation the moſt contemptible thing in Nature, and put him under the feet of thoſe Brutes, he was made to rule over. So that without voluntary Agency, that is, without a Will and the proper Exerciſe thereof, Man becomes little better than a Senſleſs Machine.

But now on the contrary, we ſee plainly, that, by the good providence and diſpoſal of Almighty God, men have power to do many things, as namely, to cultivate the Earth, to build houſes, to provide againſt hunger and cold, to educate their Children, to exerciſe ſeveral Arts and Trades, for the benefit of humane life, and to manage all theſe according to certain Rules, Methods and Obſervations,

arising partly from Experience, and partly from mens consulting one another. I say, in all these, and a thousand more particulars, men do consider and deliberate, and then pursue their several designs, some with a greater, others with a lesser share of prudence, but each imploying his Measure, and accordingly determining to choose this, and refuse the other.

In short, I conceive, that God having indued Man with an understanding to judge, and a Will to choose, and continually supplying him with power to act according to his Nature, he doth not ordinarily over-power, or impel his faculties, but leaves him to the free Use and Exercise thereof in things within his proper Sphere. And this is what I mean by Free-will. Now I address to my Province, which is to assert this, together with God's Fore-knowledge of future Events from the Scriptures.

The first pair of Scriptures that I imploy for this service, shall be out of *Exodus*, a where *Moses* is appointed of God to go unto *Pharaoh*, and say unto him, *Let us go, we beseech thee, into the wilderness, &c.*

a) Chap 3. 18. Chap. 5. 19.

*neſs. &c.* It is not eaſily to be imagined, but that Pharaoh had power to have granted this requeſt at firſt, and the very requeſt it ſelf doth ſtrongly imply a Liberty of granting it. No good Maſter will require any thing of his meaneſt Servant, with intention to puniſh him ſeverely for not doing it, and yet ſecretly contrive means to prevent and diſable him, that he cannot do it. To ſay, that God ſhould ſend *Moſes* to make a requeſt unto *Pharaoh*, ſaying, *Let us go, we pray thee*, that he ſhould deſtroy him at laſt for refuſing, and in the mean time ſhould bind up his heart by ſome irreſiſtable influence, from all poſſibility of granting it: this would not only excuſe *Pharaoh* from the guilt of ſin, but make an odious repreſentation of the Ever bleſſed God; as if his wiſdom were exercis'd in laying ſnares for the innocent, and his power in their deſtruction. Should a Writing-Maſter guide his Scholars hand, to make a blot, or ſome ill Character, and then beat him for it, whereas being left to himſelf he would have done better, what could be thought of ſuch behaviour in a Maſter? and how juſt would be the Scholar's indignation againſt him?

The ſinfulneſs of an action conſiſts in this, that it is voluntary, and againſt the Command; the nature of a voluntary action is, that 'tis done out of choice and deliberation, when otherwiſe it might be forborn. Now, either *Pharaoh* ſinn'd in detaining the people, or he did not; if not, wherefore was he deſtroy'd? a *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* If he did, he acted out of choice, and conſequently he might have diſmiſſed the *Iſraelites* ſooner, if he had pleaſed. Hence it will alſo follow, that there could be no ſecret influence nor any predetermining Concourſe from God, to bind his faculties, or take away his Free-agency: only the pride of his heart, deſpiſing God's Meſſage to him, and his domineering ambition to keep the People in ſlavery, did out-weigh (in his unjuſt Ballance) the other Motives he had to diſpence with them.

And herein conſiſteth the nature of Election, that of two things propoſed, with Motives on either part, a man freely chooſeth that which likes him beſt, in his preſent apprehenſion, tho' at the ſame time (if he thought good) he might chooſe the other. Thus did Pharaoh chooſe to

a) Gen. 18. 2.

de-

detain the People, there's his Choice: yet before ever the matter was propounded to him, God himself says, [a] *I am sure he will not let you go*; here is *Fore-knowledge*: Therefore Divine Prescience and Humane Liberty are consistent, and have been conversant about the same individual Action.

But here an objection may arise from the seventh Chapter and the third verse, where God says, [b] *He will harden Pharaoh's heart*: From whence it might be supposed, that *Pharaoh* could not act voluntarily, nor be said to have any real Freedom of Will. To this I answer:

1. I will not deny, but that in consideration of *Pharaoh*'s former wickedness, in dealing so barbarously with the People of *Israel*, God might forsake him, and give him over to hardness of heart. But then

2. I deny that this hardness of heart, by whom so ever, or in what manner so ever it was wrought, could deprive him of the Liberty of doing a Civil Act within his power. He might for some self End, or with some ill design, have dismissed the *Israelites*, and yet still have retained his



a) Exod. 3. 19. (b) Exod. 7. 3.

hard heart: it was but a word ſpeaking, and the buſineſs had been done. And it is obſervable, that while the ſmart was upon him, he could ſay, a *I and my People are wicked*; and promiſed too, to let the Iſraelites go; but ſtill, as he found reſpit, (thinking perhaps the ſtorm was over) he retracted. On the one hand, there was the danger of periſhing, or having (at leaſt) his Kingdom ruin'd by thoſe Judgements God ſent upon him: On the other hand, there was the luſt of tyrannizing over an enſlaved People, and the benefit of their labours in making Brick. Theſe two weights being oppoſed each to other in the Scales, ſometimes the one, and then preſently the other preponderates. And this purely is deliberation, the reſult whereof is chooſing, and chooſing is the undoubted property of a free Agent.

3. Concerning the hardening of *Pharaoh*'s heart, the apprehenſions of learned men are different: that which to me appears the moſt reaſonable is to this effect, namely, that this induration is not to be underſtood as any poſitive Act, or immediate Efficiency from God, whereby Pharaoh's

a) Exod. 9. 27, 28.

raoh's heart was made hard (muchleſs his Will predetermin'd) directly and properly, no more than it is to be underſtood that our Saviours coming was directly and properly to fill the World with diſſentions, becauſe he himſelf ſaith expreſly, that [a] *he came not to bring peace on the Earth, but rather diviſion.* The primary intention of the Goſpel, no doubt, was *Peace and good will towards men*; but meeting with various tempers, and ſundry degrees of corruption in the hearts of men, it could not chooſe but occaſion diſſention and a ſword upon the Earth. In like manner the primary intention of Gods Judgments, is to reform the World, and bring men to repentance, whilſt in ſome perſons they have a quite contrary effect. So that, as the Goſpel of Peace was the accidental cauſe of War, ſo might God's dealing with *Pharaoh* tend to harden his heart, and yet to ſoften a leſs rebellious one, as the ſame Sun beam melteth Wax and hardneth Clay. And as ſin by the Commandment becomes exceeding ſinful, [b] in ſo much that the Commandment it ſelf, which was ordained unto life, is



(a) Luk 12. 50,51. (b) Rom. 7. 11,13.

found to be unto death: So Pharaoh's ſtubbornneſs, under the Divine hand, becomes the more exceeding ſtubborn; and that Chaſtiſement, which was ordained unto reformation, did the more effectually promote his deſtruction. Hence it is highly probable, that, *I will harden his heart,* may import no more than this, I will bring ſuch things to paſs, and in ſuch a manner, as ſhall, through his own corruptions, render him much more obdurate.

That the natural and direct tendency of Gods dealing with *Pharaoh* was to convince him, ſeems very apparent from theſe conſiderations: 1. He orders *Moſes* to try him with innocent Miracles, afterwards with ſmarting ones, by ſuch degrees, till it come at laſt to the death of his Firſt-born. 2. While the plagues lay heavy upon him, he gave ſome ſigns of a yielding and relenting temper, but ever in the intervalls he contracted a greater obduratneſs. 3. The Judgments of God had their proper effect upon the Egyptians, ſo far, that they would gladly have had the Iſraelites dimiſſed ſooner, and at laſt, were not only urgent to have them gone in haſte, but willing to part with their

their [a] Jewells into the bargain. These considerations (I say) seem very much to favour the forementioned sense of the Place, but whether that be the only true meaning of it, I shall not contend, so long as I can make it good, that *Pharaoh* was a Free-Agent in that particular thing which was foretold by God Almighty.

The next double Testimony shall be out of [b] *Ezekiel*, where the Prophet is sent to the *Israelites*, and words put into his mouth, to warn and dehort them from their wicked ways, lest they should dye. Hence I argue thus; Either the house of *Israel* might have obeyed Gods message to them by the Prophet, or else not: If not, how shall we clear the sincerity of Gods dealings with them? Or will his Message to them appear any more than a Complement? Let us have a care of intrenching upon blasphemy. But, if they might have humbled themselves at the Prophet's voice, as *Nineveh* did, in the like case, it will follow, that they were not by any previous necessity divested of their *Liberum Arbitrium*, as is also evident from these words so often repeated in the



a) Exod. 12. 33, 35. (b) Ezek. 3. 4.

Prophet's Commiſſion, *Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear*; which is as much as to ſay, they have their free choice. And what follows? [a] *But the Houſe of Iſrael will not harken unto thee.* God doth not only afford Liberty and Opportunity of repentance, but he urges the ſame by ſtrong pleadings and inducements: and yet at the ſame time, he foreſees a contrary Event. And this is what I undertook to aſſert from the Scriptures.

Again, in the 5th of *Hoſea*, [b] God foretells, that *Iſrael* and *Ephraim* ſhall fall in their iniquity, *Iuda* alſo ſhall fall with them: yet in the 6th Chapter [c] he exhorts to repentance. This indeed might have its proper effect too, upon ſome ſmall remnant that ſhould eſcape, [d] and remember God among the Nations whither they were to be carried captives. But now there is the ſame means afforded to thoſe that ſhould fall in their iniquity, as to the few that ſhould eſcape; nor doth God's Foreknowledge of the ſeveral Events impoſe a neceſſity upon either. He grants Liberty unto both, which he knows a remnant will

(a) Ezek. 3. 7. (b) Hoſea 5. 5. (c) Hoſea 6. 1. (d) Ezek. 6. 8, 9.

will make good uſe of, whilſt the greater Number will abuſe it to their ruin. Thus it is evident, that Liberty and Preſcience are conſiſtent.

It is moreover propheſied, that by [a] reaſon of Idolatry, they ſhall be as Chaff driven with a whirlewind out of the Floor, and as ſmoke out of the Chinney: yet afterwards, we read in the ſame Chapter, [b] *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf.* We do not uſe to ſay, a man deſtroys himſelf, that is unwillingly run down by external force, or ſome inevitable neceſſity: nor can he that ruines himſelf charge the fault upon another. If *Iſrael* deſtroys himſelf, he is ſurely the Agent of his own deſtruction; and if ſo, he is either a Voluntary or an involuntary Agent: if involuntary, he cannot be ſaid to deſtroy himſelf, no more than a houſe burns it ſelf when fire is ſet to it by an Incendiary. An involuntary Agent, as a Sword or a Hammer, can only act as 'tis mannag'd by hands, and thoſe govern'd by the Will. It remaines then, that Iſrael was the voluntary Agent of his own ruine; and, ſince this is foretold of God by the Prophet, it



a) Hoſea 13. 1. (b) Hoſea 13. 9.

muſt follow (if the Scriptures be true) that Divine preſcience doth not any way infringe the Liberty, or Free-agency of rational Creatures.

God foreſaw, that wicked hands would be forward enough to deliver up that Divine Perſon unto death, who was the [a] Lord of Life; nay, his determinate counſel did concur with his Fore-knowledge, ſo far as to let it proceed to execution, as the learned *Mr. Howe* obſerves. And our Saviour [b] himſelf, not only deſcribes particularly the manner and circumſtances of his own death, when yet it was not near at hand, but is ſaid alſo to [c] *know all things* that ſhould come upon him. Yet if the Actors of this wickedneſs had been rightly informed what they were about, they would have left their work for other hands. That's very ſtrange (ſays one of our Diſputants) here is an Event ſecur'd by the determinate counſel of God, here is the place where, the manner how, and the Perſons by whom it ſhould be brought to paſs, deſcrib'd before hand by our Saviour; can any thing that is ſo infallibly certain admit of an If? Yes, in St. Paul's ac-

(a) Act. 2. 23. (b) Matt. 20. 17. (c) Jo. 18. 4.

account it may, and he is a perſon that deſerves ſome regard. And indeed, his aſſertion will appear highly reaſonable, when we conſider the Princes of this world, ſo ſadly misinformed as they were; and impos'd upon by all the wicked Artifice imaginable, yet we do not find them very eager to be concern'd in the blood of that juſt perſon, when the principal Agent pretends [a] to waſh his hands of it, and profeſſes, [b] he found no cauſe of death in him. And had it not been for the impetuous clamours of a wretched people, and the danger of a tumult, 'tis probable that the malicious contrivances of the Prieſts, and their ſham Evidence, would not have weighed againſt *Pilate's* native Clemency. What muſt we then think had been done, in caſe of a right information? Why the Apoſtle tells us; [c] *Had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.* This puts it out of all doubt that they were under no other force than the Reſult of their own deliberation. On the one hand, there was the meekneſs of the Priſoner, the clemency of the Judge, and the diſagreement of the Witneſſes: on the other



a) Mat. 27. 24. (b) Luk. 23. 22. (c) 1 Cor. 2. 8.

hand, there was the influence of the Priests, the ignorance of the Court, and cries of the Multitude; which kept the busines for a while in *Equilibrio*; but then, the fear of a tumult superadded, cast the Scales. Nor were they under any further Necessity of crucifying our Saviour, by means of such Divine Foresight, that he should be crucified, than they would have been under, in case it were to be supposed, that God had not so punctually foreseen, or foretold the same.

There are many other places of Scripture, that do evidently prove there is in Man a free Election. *Solomon* is commended for asking Wisdome, [a] when he might have asked riches, or length of dayes, or revenge upon his Enemies: and *Ananias* [b] is the more condemned for falsity about the price of the Land, because that even after it was sold, it was in his own power.

[c] *If a Wife make a Vow, it is left to her husbands choice, either to establish it; or to make it void.*

[d] *Choose you this day whom you will serve. Go*

a) 1 Kings 3. 1. (b) Act. 4. 5. (c) Num. 30. 1. (d) Jos. 24. 15.

[a] *Go and say unto* David, *thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things; choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee.*

These Scriptures are so clear, they need no Commentary, nor do they admit of any objection. And I think there is no less Evidence for Divine Prescience, since all Prophecies, and many other places of Scripture, do either directly, or by just consequence put it beyond dispute, with all that acknowledge the Authority of that sacred Book. I shall mention no more but this one, and therewith close up this first part of my undertaking: it is so direct and full to the purpose, as if the H. Ghost had design'd it to remove all scruple and hesitation about that matter. [b] *I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.*

Had I leisure now, or opportunity, to consult the Fathers or Schoolmen; I am inclinable to believe, I should have their general suffrage in this matter; but truly those Gentlemen are none of my Familiars, and I was loth to trouble them. Yet meeting by accident with two of them, which are

a) 2 Sam. 24. 12. (b) Isa. 46. 9.

are esteemed no less than Oracles, I made bold to ask them their opinions in the case. I confess, I was not displeased to find them so very civil, and favourable to the Notions, I had already formed, and in part written down, concerning this subject. One of these was the learned *Suarez*, who first of all disputing copiously about Mans capacity of acting freely; he brings it at last to this issue: [a] *Experimur enim evidenter, situmesse in nostra potestate aliquid agere vel omittere, & ad hoc utemur ratione & discursu ac consultatione, ut in unam partem potius quam in aliam inclinemur: Est ergo Electio positiva in nostro arbitrio, alioqui fuisset nobis data superflue, hac deliberandi & consultandi vis.* This comes close to that point. And then in the next place, he doth no less vigorously maintain God's Fore-knowledge of all Events and Actions, whether voluntary, or contingent; the sum of which is thus,

„ [b] God cannot (saith he) be ignorant „ of what he himself doth, or will do, be„ cause he knows his own Will and his „ power to effect what he wills. Nor „ can

a) Metaph. Tom. 1. pag. 338, 339. (b) Tome 2. Pag. 92, 93.

„ can he be ignorant of what his Creatures „ do now, or what they ſhall do hereaf- „ ter, becauſe whatever is poſitive in their „ actions, is by immediate influence from „ himſelf: and what there is of privation „ or defect, cannot be without his per- „ miſſion, and therefore he cannot be „ ignorant of mens ſinful or wicked a- „ ctions. He goes on to ſhew, that unleſs „ God did foreknow from Eternity what „ ever was, or is to come to paſs in time, „ he could neither be omnipotent nor „ immutable. Not omnipotent, becauſe „ in reference to thoſe things whereof he „ had no foreſight, his Providence and „ Government of affairs muſt needs be „ defective. Not immutable, becauſe ſome- „ thing muſt daily occur to his know- „ ledge which he knew not before.

*Atque hinc ſequitur Deum habere hanc Scientiam Creaturarum quæ fiunt in tempore ex æternitate ſua, ut totam illam ſimul habeat ſine ſucceſſione, quia non poteſt in ſe variationem admittere; item quia non poſſet Deus habere perfectam providentiam in rebus adminiſtrandis, niſi haberet omnium præſcientiam.* Thus far that eminent Schoolman.

The

The other is the Angelical *Thomas Aquinas*, as ſome are pleaſed to ſtyle him. He in his *Sum of Theologie* diſpatches me in a few words. For having firſt deſcribed Providence to be a reſpect to ſomewhat that is diſtant, according to which the occurrences now preſent are to be ordered, which doth therefore neceſſarily include preſcience: he ſaith afterwards, *Providentia Dei eſt omnium ſingularium, nec tamen à rebus excludit contingentiam, nec caſum, nec fortunam, nec liberum arbitrium.*

Add hereunto, that it was allowed by *St. Auguſtine* as a Maxime: *That God by his fore-knowledge, doth not neceſſitate, or conſtrain, the coming to paſs of the things fore-known by him.* Theſe Teſtimonies, as they are of unqueſtionable Authority, ſo are they clear, direct, and full to the purpoſe; and this is all I deſign for the firſt general head.

I am now in the ſecond place to attempt certain reaſons, or conſiderations, whereby to accommodate the difference, or at leaſt to leſſen the oppoſition, that ſeems to be between Preſcience and Free Will. The heads to be inſiſted on for that purpoſe are theſe three: namely, *The truth of*

*of the Holy Scriptures*, *The Harmony of the Divine Attributes*, and *The Non-causality of Divine Prescience.*

First then, I argue from the verity of the Scriptures; for I am not designing to confute an Atheist, writing only to such as do acknowledge the Truth and Authority of those Sacred Letters; but chiefly (as I said before) for my own satisfaction. Some young Divines indeed I have observed, who in their first setting out to preach the *Word*, affect to preach altogether without it, and seem to triumph in dispelling the darkness of Atheisme and Irreligion, by the Gloworm-Light of corrupt Nature: others there are, that prove their Doctrines out of *Terence*, *Tully* and *Seneca*; whether it is, because they have not read the Bible, or that they prefer the Authority of Heathen Writers before it, or that they would be thought to be profoundly learned, I shall not dispute; but I find other more experienc'd Workmen, who do not trouble themselves to dig below the true foundation, but think the Rock of Ages safe enough for them to build on. Now, as that Comical Sort of Preaching, to vulgar Ears, doth rather amuse

amuſe than edifie; So this Eſſay (which is not like to be regarded by the learned) if it ſhould happen to take the Country air, would look very thin without Scripture-Evidence. But if indeed the Scriptures do clearly ſpeak the Subſtance of what is herein contained, this ought to have the force of a Reaſon, with all thoſe that acknowledge the Authority of that Book. Nor will it be material to object, that this Argument doth not ſufficiently make out the reaſonableneſs of what is here pleaded for: For as there are ſeveral Ranks of Privileg'd things, which will not condeſcend to Common Reaſon; ſo there are ſeveral degrees of reaſon alſo, of which the lower ought to yield to the Superiour; and it is the higheſt reaſon ſure, that *God is true*, tho' every man ſhould be found a Lyer.

I am by no means againſt it yet, that Atheiſm ſhould be encountred upon it's own principles, if at leaſt it can be ſaid to have any principles at all; but every Stripling is not a fit Champion for an overgrown Philiſtine: and I had rather have that Province entirely left to ſuch as can manage it, than have the Truth to ſuffer by

by weak Patronage. As for those therefore, that expect better proof than from the Word of God, and those natural consequences arising thence, I shall leave them to the discipline of their own Consciences; for if they are not convinced by what *Bp. Wilkins*, *Bp. Ward*, *Mr. Boyle*, *Dr. Cudworth*, *Sr. Cha. Wolseley*, and some others, have already said against Atheism, I shall never hope to give them satisfaction.

But as for those two Gentlemen, betwixt whom the Controversy was started, upon which occasion I scribble down these hasty Notes, they are both of them (I hope) serious Christians, not doubting in the least the truth of the Scriptures, yet differing vastly in their apprehensions about this matter. One of them is firm in the belief of Divine Prescience, but somewhat hesitant as to the business of Free Will: The other is so much a Free-willer, that he seems to cashier Divine Prescience; For „ (says he) if God offer me any good thing, „ and knows in the mean time I will not „ accept of it, I am nothing beholding to „ him for his kindness. - - - -

This manner of expression concerning God, is over-bold and sawcy; for we may

may not ſpeak of him with ſuch a Liberty, as is allowable in other matters. Beſides, let us obſerve the conſequence, and we ſhall find it to be this, that either God Almighty has no knowledge at all of future Events; or elſe, that all conditional promiſes, throughout the whole Scripture, are no more than ſhadows: the former of which conſequences ſtrikes at the perfection of the Divine Nature, and the latter blurrs the ſincerity of the inſpired Writings. To which it may be added, that ſuch Doctrine is falſe, and injurious to the goodneſs of God: For his benefits offered to Mankind are not to be valued by his fore-knowledge of Non-acceptance, but by their own intrinſick worth, and by Mans Capacity of enjoying them if he will. And tho' God doth aſſuredly know who will not accept of his kindneſs, yet he knows at the ſame time, the fault is in themſelves; nor is their refuſal any further neceſſary from ſuch Divine foreſight, than otherwiſe it would have been. So that ſome perſons will ſeem indeed to have a great Veneration for the Scriptures, and yet own ſuch principles as render a great part of them inſignificant; for, if God Fore

Fore-knowledge neceſſitate all Events, ſo that nothing could have fallen out otherwiſe than it doth: then all Divine Precepts and Rules of Life, all promiſes and threatnings upon certain conditions, are no more but Cheats and empty Formalities. But now, to thoſe that ſincerely acknowledge the Divine Authority and Truth of the Scriptures, as all Chriſtians ought to do, the argument will lay thus;

> Whatever is intirely true, is alſo harmonious and ſelf-conſiſtent. But the Scriptures are true. Ergo, &c.

If it be urged, that the Scriptures, as proceeding from God, are indeed moſt perfectly and entirely true, yet paſſing through the hands of ſo many men, in various Copies and Verſions, from one Language into another, it cannot be, but ſomething of humane infirmity muſt ſtick to them. This indeed I freely grant; and if any ſuch thing can be made evident in the Caſe before us, it will be very fit to be conſidered. In the mean time, there can hardly any two things be named that are more clearly and vigorouſly aſſerted in Scrip-

Scripture, than are Divine prescience and Free-will, as well in the places above-mentioned, as in divers others. From whence in will follow, that, if those places of Scripture be genuine, and no way corrupted (which we must suppose, till the contrary be made out) Gods Fore-knowledge and Man's Free-agency, are not only true, but perfectly harmonious, and consistent each with other, altho' our limited sight and dazled eyes cannot fully enable us to behold their agreement.

Nor need we wonder at it, when we consider, that not only in the Scriptures, but in *Euclid's Elements*, and many other Books approved in their kind, are found divers things, which a great number of Readers, tho' men of good sense, cannot easily understand or reconcile; and some things of that difficulty, that the greatest Masters of Learning and Reason, have more than work enough to overcome, of which, if need required, one might give particular instances. Who will believe that the least Diameter of a needle's point should be divisible into a Million (or rather infinite) parts, and yet that a Circle, how large soever, can touch a right line but in

in [a] one point only? And ſince a globular body ſet upon a plain, can reach the ſame but in one point, and a point is defined to be that, which hath no part: would it not be a ſtrange Paradox to ſay, [b] A Globe can touch a Plain in no part at all? Yet all this leans upon Mathematical Demonſtration.

It is eaſy to obſerve, that when any difficulty, or ſeeming oppoſition doth occur in Scripture, which common Readers cannot (and even learned ones not very eaſily) reconcile; two ſorts of People, the Prophane, and Superſtitious, take hold of it to very ill purpoſe: the one, apprehending it their Intereſt, to have no Religion at all, looks upon the Scripture as a State contrivance to keep the World in order and ſubjection, and hence they aſſume a lew'd Liberty of turning it into *Burleſque* and *Ridicule*; the other ſort, being for the moſt part over eagerly devoted to ſome Party, have a Religion made up of a few fractions of truth, neglecting in the mean time the ſum and ſubſtance. Theſe men purſue, to the beſt advantage



a) That is, the right line being drawn as a tangent, but not through the Circle.
(b) Eucl. def. 1, Lib. 3. prop. 16. Lib. 10. prop. 117.

of their Sect, that part of Scripture which hath the kindeſt aſpect upon their eſpouſed Notions, and run it off from the main body of truth, to that Extream, that it becomes an Errour in Doctrine, and perhaps too a Rent in the Church. For the body of Truth may not unfitly be reſembled to the body natural, which cannot live in pieces.

That there are unchangeable Decrees of God, I do not doubt: but if that Doctrine be ſo manag'd as to evacuate men's Endeavours, this ſurely is an unwarrantable Extream. Juſtification by Faith is a great truth; but if it be imprudently carried to that height, as to exclude, or make men neglect a good life, it will become a dangerous Errour. That Chriſt dy'd for all, is a glorious Truth, as it is laid down in Scripture: but if ſome ſtretch that Doctrine to the actual *Salvation of all men*, and others thereupon put the whole buſineſs of Salvation within *Man's power*, theſe doubtleſs are vitious Extreams, opening a wide paſſage for pride or prophaneneſs. The one makes Religion altogether vain, and the other makes the grace of God not worth looking after.

So

So that whilſt men run into ſuch violent Extremities, they ſeem to tear off ſome particular Truths from their Unity with the whole, which from thence forward turn into corruption, whilſt the main body of Truth is deſerted by them, and becomes uſeleſs.

And this is the Caſe, not only of the leſs conſidering Sectaries, but even of thoſe that pretend highly to Philoſophy, and aſpire after the Reputation of Wits; One whereof (ſufficiently known) hath improv'd three Syllabes to that height, as to render a great part of the Scriptures ridiculous, and the Noble army of Martyrs no other than a Company of wilful and ſuperſtitious Fools, in needleſly expoſing themſelves to flames and tortures. [a] *Go in peace*, ſays the Prophet to *Naaman*; which ſingle caſe he advances to a general diſpenſation for any man to quit his Religion as oft as it ſhall be difficult and dangerous for him to profeſs it. And this I take to be the fountain Cauſe of all the Diviſions that are, or have been among Chriſtians; namely, that men will not read the whole Scriptures, and give



a) 2 Kings 5, 19.

each part its juſt weight and meaſure, duly ballanceing and comparing one thing with another: but each man according to his Complexion or Education, or perhaps ſome predominant Melancholy, lays hold of that part that ſuits him beſt, and makes up a Religion for himſelf, which is little more than the Reſult of his natural temper.

Here I call to mind a paſſage of a Quaker, which I happen'd to be preſent at: The man was reputed among his Neighbours, an honeſt plain Man, but ſomewhat raſh, and of no deep conſideration, as may appear by the Story. The Diſcourſe fell out to be about ſwearing, and the Quaker could not forbear to declaim bitterly againſt it, becauſe it is ſaid, [a] *Swear not at all.* One of the Company urged that of the *Hebrews*, where the *Author*, ſpeaking of God's confirming [b] his promiſe made to *Abraham*, ſeems to intimate ſtrongly the neceſſity of ſwearing in ſome caſes, not vainly, or in common diſcourſe, but in a ſolemn manner, for the avoiding of contention, and for confirming of ſome weighty matter. And the *Author* doth

a) Matt. 5. 34. (b) Hebr. 6. 13. 16, 17.

doth not only alledge it, without any manner of reproof, as a practiſe amongſt Men, who uſe to ſwear by the greater, and amongſt whom an Oath for confirmation is an End of ſtrife: but he adds further, that God himſelf, the more abundantly to ſhew the immutability of his Counſel, doth condeſcend to that uſage, confirming his promiſe by an Oath. To all which the Quaker ſuddenly replied, the *Author was a Lyer in that thing*: A deciſion ſomewhat ſurpriſing, and no leſs than blaſphemy; yet had thus much of ingenuity in it, as to yield the force of the Argument on no eaſier terms to be avoided.

Thus if men will needs imagine an incongruity between Preſcience and Free-will, and ſo reject the one; tho' both are equally aſſerted in Scripture: I cannot ſee how they can do it otherwiſe, than by the Quaker's Argument. But ſurely men of reaſon and ſedate temper, will rather argue thus, that ſince Preſcience and Free-Will agree in *uno tertio*, and that no leſs than the Word of God; they muſt not only be agreed betwixt themſelves, but both true. And therefore if we cannot get them to fadge together in our minds,

the reaſon muſt not be any mutual jarring of theirs, but want of room in our underſtandings. If that Sacred Book were impartially read, and Religiouſly attended to, no violence put upon it, but all its parts underſtood (as they ought to be) in Congruity with the main bulk and ſubſtance of the Doctrine therein contained, it would put an End to this and many other Debates. The *Magiſtrate's Sword*, and the *Peoples Conſcience*; the *Prince's Prerogative*, and *Subject's Liberty*; the *Divine Attributes*, and the *Eſſential properties* of *humane Nature*, would all enjoy their full Exerciſe and Latitude, without invading one another. And this leads to the next thing I am to conſider, namely,

The *Harmony of Divine Attributes*. Where there are inteſtine Jarr's and Strugling Diſcord, there is no Unity, nor any thing like perfection: but thoſe natural Notions we have of the being of a God, do at the ſame time, and with equal Evidence, dictate to us his eſſential perfection; therefore to talk of an imperfect Deity, is ſo great a piece of Non-ſenſe, as cannot ſufficiently be expos'd, becauſe there is nothing in the World to which

it

it can be reduced, more abſurd than it ſelf. Down-right *Atheiſm* is indeed a monſtrous thing, yet I think 'tis capable of a better colour, than having once acknowledg'd an adorable Supreme being, at the ſame time to conclude him lame, or deficient. He that looks about him into the World, and yet ſays in his heart, [a] *There is no God*, is properly a Fool, and that cannot make a rational inference, and from the things that are made, cannot ſo much as conclude there muſt be a [b] Maker. And when both his Bible, and his own Eyes may inform him, that every Houſe is built by ſome Man, yet [c] (as if the World muſt build it ſelf) ſo foolish is he, as not to conſider, that he that built all things is God. But now, he that thinks God like unto himſelf [d], that is, ſubject to failings and imperfections, is ſtyled *Improbus*, [e] wicked or deteſtable, which ſeems to be the heavier charge of the two. And I have heard of ſome of the Ancients, *Plutarch* I think it was, ſpeaking to this effect; *I had rather Poſterity ſhould ſay, there never was ſuch a Man, than that*



a) Pſal. 14. 1. (b) Rom. 1. 2. (c) Hebr. 3. 4. (d) Pſal. 50. (e) 16. 21.

*Plutarch was an injurious and vile Person.*

Now this foundation, which is deep laid both in Scripture & Natural Reason, namely, that God is every way perfect, is enough to build my whole design upon. He is perfect in power; [a] *He doth what he will both in Heaven and in Earth:* perfect in Justice, [b] *Shall not the Judge of all the Earth do right?* perfect in Knowledge, [c] *Declaring the End from the beginning.* His [d] *Will* is *perfect*; his [e] *Law* is *perfect*; his [f] *Work* is *perfect*, all his [g] *Ways* are *Judgement.* If the Streams be so clear, the Fountain must needs be pure. But if any man now will raise a dispute amongst the Divine perfections (like that of the Disciples) *which should be greatest*; or should give so much to one, as to leave nothing for another; he would make strange work. Just as if some Man should be said to be a very prudent and just person in himself, yet when he comes to deal with his Neighbour, his prudence undermines his honesty, and so he would become a knave: or on the contrary, should his honesty

a) Chr. 20.6. (b) Gen. 18.25. (c) Job 36.4. (d) Rom. 12.2. (e) Psal. 18. 30. 2 Sam. 22. 31. (f) Deut. 32. 4.

neſty out-go his diſcretion, that would (in ſome degree) render him a fool. And this tho' a blunt compariſon, ſeems to be the very caſe in debate. We muſt however be careful to ſpeak with Reverence and Decorum, even in applying the moſt juſt conſequences of other Mens Doctrine unto the Divine Majeſty.

The Attributes we are concern'd with in this matter are chiefly two; but by conſequent a great many more; Gods *Wiſdom* and his *Goodneſs*; the former implies knowledge, and that includes preſcience; the latter comprehends Juſtice, in which Free-will is ſtrongly implyed. In reference to the firſt, take but away from God his Fore-knowledge of future Events, and you may almoſt as well dethrone him; for beſides that, it doth clearly infer ignorance and imperfection, whereby his *Wiſdom* and *Knowledge* will come in queſtion; it carries with it a kind of Impotency: for he that knows not of an Event before it comes, may be ſurpriſed and defeated of his Expectation; and how ſhould he have *Power* to have prevented what he knew not of before? *Suarez* is poſitive in the place above men-

tioned, *that had not God a fore-knowledge of all things, he were not fit to govern the world.* And as for the latter, take away from man his free agency, and you bring him under such a fatality that he is in no sort Master of his own actions; and then saith the learned *Dr. Cudworth*, [a] *you take away the foundation of distributive Justice*: for what equity can there be in the Reward or Punishment of those things, wherein Man has no choice, and which could not possibly have fallen out otherwise? So that here is no denying of Either, without rejecting one or more of the Divine Attributes, and so rendring the blessed God a lame and imperfect Being: as if he could not be omniscient, but he must be Arbitrary; nor just, without being Ignorant:

Besides, how can God be said *to search the Heart*, [b] and [c] *try the Reins*, or to what purpose should he do it, unless he knows the bent and tendency of mens minds, and what they will do before they act it? And how can he suit his Providences to his blessed [d] Ends and purposes, for the good

a) Intellectual World. (b) Rom. 8. 27. [c] Jer. 11. 20. d Rom. 8. 28.

good of his people, if he knows not the Exigencies that ſhall befall them? On the other hand, if there be no voluntary agents in the World, what need any providence at all? General Laws might ſerve the turn, 'tis but putting the ſeveral parts and wheels of the Creation together, and ſet them a moving like a *Pendulum*, and they will drive on one another; and ſo *Epicurus* his doctrine comes in play, that *God regards not particular things*. What can we expect but confuſion and diſorder, whilſt we invade the Divine Attributes, or labour to ſet them at odds one with another?

But now, if we lay aſide all perverſeneſs and prepoſſeſſion, the Harmony of the Divine Perfections will be a moſt pleaſant object of our conſideration. God doth not impoſe a Neceſſity of ſinning upon any man; but he knows ſome men will be ready enough to ſin, out of choice. He doth not puniſh or reward in men what he acteth himſelf, or what he cauſeth them to act without the intervention of their Wills; but if ſome will be vertuous, and others vitious, when they might be otherwiſe, God is juſt in puniſhing and reward-

ing, tho' not ignorant, in the meantime, who will deſerve well or ill at his hands. In a word, God doth know, that Man is a free Agent, becauſe he made him ſo, and doth daily preſerve him in that Capacity; he alſo knows, that ſome men will abuſe their freedom in ſpite of all invitations and inducements to the contrary, unleſs he interpoſe his Soveraign power (as ſometimes I conceive he doth) to move them irreſiſtably unto good.

From what hath been ſaid, the Argument will lie thus. God is perfect in all his Attributes, and harmonious in all his actings, and providences, throughout the World: But the denial of Divine Preſcience doth infringe his Wiſdom and power, and the denial of Free-will doth obſtruct his juſtice; therefore it muſt follow, that Mans Free-agency is not only conſiſtent with Gods Fore-knowledge of future Events, but both of them are moſt certainly true.

The third thing to be conſidered, is the *Non-cauſality of Divine Preſcience.* At the time indeed when this Diſcourſe happened, I was laught at by one of the Gentlemen,

men, for using that as an argument, which he would by no means admit for a truth. But I do not look upon laughter as a sufficient confutation; and oft-times those who carry things at highest, are farthest out of the way. I shall therefore lay down this Proposition, and run the hazard of proving it, namely, that *God's foresight of what I shall hereafter choose, hath not any causality in it, to determine my choice, nor to infringe at all my Liberty of choosing.* If I can make this evident, it will be very material: for the main thing that seems to byass and mislead mens minds in this matter, is an apprehension, that Gods Foreknowledge of any thing must needs cause the same, and that thence all other inferior causes, must be urged on by such a fatal Necessity, that the Effect is put quite without the Verge of *Liberum Arbitrium.* But this I hope will appear to be a great Extravagancy from the following considerations.

Let us then observe *first*, that all foresight or prescience, is nothing else but a sort of knowledge, and knowledge doth suppose something to be known antecedent thereunto. A man cannot be said to know, but

he muſt know ſomething that was in being before he knew it: and even the objects of Divine Fore-knowledge have a virtual Exiſtence in God, antecedent in order of Nature thereunto: ſo that as to himſelf it is rather *Intuition* than *Preſcience*, but with reſpect unto us, and to the not-yet actual exiſtence of the objects, the word Preſcience is proper enough, as was noted before. Knowledge then hath its dependence upon the things known, not they on it; and therefore ſtrictly, knowledge, conſidered barely as ſuch, is an Effect and no cauſe at all. As for example, I know that the Sun warms and refreſhes; but then there was a Sun in being firſt, whoſe influence I have found to have this effect upon me. I know that the three Angles of every Triangle are equal to two right-angles, becauſe firſt, I have ſeen a Triangle, and then I have ſeen the *Theorem* demonſtrated: but my knowing it, is no cauſe why it is ſo. I deny not yet, that the knowledge of one thing, is frequently the cauſe of another thing ſubſequent, and emergent thereupon: but never of that particular thing known: for inſtance, my knowledge of a high water makes me de-

decline the foord, and go about by the bridge, but it is not therefore the cauſe of the high water. I know that ſuch a Man is crafty, for which cauſe I take care, that he do not over-reach me: but my knowledge is no cauſe of his craftineſs. [a] *I know the blaſphemy of them which ſay they are* Jews, *and are not* (ſaith he that holdeth the ſeven Stars in his right hand:) but if any Man will ſay, that this knowledge was the cauſe of that blaſphemy, he will go near to be a Blaſphemer himſelf.

*Obj.* But here it will be objected, *That theſe Inſtances are only of things already in being, which are not like to be cauſed by a knowledge ſubſequent thereunto: but the queſtion is about the Knowledge of things to comes; beſides, if Preſcience be but a ſpecies of knowledge, and that all knowledge ſuppoſeth ſomething to be known antecedent to it, as was intimated above, it ſeems there may be a certain* Preſcience *of a thing antecedent, or, which is all one, Fore-knowledge of a thing paſt*: but is not this plain contradiction?

This Objection will be eaſily anſwered, by conſidering the Nature of Preſcience a little

a) Rev. 2. 9.

little more particularly. And first, there is a kind of fore-knowledge of certain things, that Man is capable of, as namely, *Changes of the Moon*, *Eclipses of both the great Luminaries*, various *Phases*, *Conjunctions* and *Configurations* of *Planets*, *Oeculations* of *Fixed Stars*, with divers other *Phænomena*: all these, by Calculation, may be foreseen for many years, and foretold even to a few Minutes. The Kings observer (for example) or any other Curious Astronomer, knows of these appearances before they come, and when to watch them at the Observatory. But is there any man so pleasant, as to say, that the Astronomers Skill is the cause of an Eclipse? or, if *Monsr. Hevelius* can tell when some of the fixed Stars will disappear, that therefore he hides them cunningly, and will not let the World see them? Now why should not humane Prescience, in its kind and degree, have a power of determining the Events foreseen, as well as Divine? and what's the reason that this foresight has not the least causality upon these Effects? I suppose it will be answered, because they depend upon certain regular and constant motions of the Celestial

leſtial bodies, which have been ever ſince the World began: and the like appearances that are now, have been heretofore, and will be again, ſo long as the World ſhall continue; ſo that this fore-knowledge is little more than Recollection of what is paſt. For as it would have been a rare thing to have foretold an Eclipſe before ever there was any, ſo would it be an eaſy matter for a Man of ordinary Skill, to predict thoſe that ſhall happen unto the worlds end, provided he were furniſhed with an exact Hiſtory of all thoſe that have been from the beginning.

Let us now examine whether theſe, or the like reaſons, may not be of force in the buſineſs of Divine Preſcience, and in order thereunto, let us ſuppoſe ſome point of time, like that of the *Iulian Period*, before the Creation, wherein the World was not yet in being. There was then in God, (1) the power and vertue of educing this ſame World out of Non-exiſtence into being. (2) A Will to do it, in ſuch time and manner as ſeemed good unto himſelf. (3) A perfect *Idea* or *Proſpect* of this great Work in all its parts and Succeſſion, and all this from Eternity.

This

This Idea, or Eternal View of all Things and Actions, that have been, or ever shall be, is what we call Divine Prescience: it was antecedent to the actual Existence of the World, but subsequent in order of Nature unto Gods Eternal Purpose of creating it. Now I appeal to the Reason of Mankind, whether it is the Platform that builds the house, or whether we ought to refer the cause of the worlds production unto this *Idea*, or rather to to the Concurrence of Divine Will and Power.

If it be still urged, *that Gods Fore-knowledge of Events must of necessity produce the same, since what he fore-knows is sure to come to pass.* It may easily be answered, that what God foresees, is indeed certain; but such certainty doth not consist in the foresight, but in the causes foreseen: and tho' the effect will surely come to pass, yet not without its proper causes, of which causes, foreknowledge can be none at all, unless it could be both the Cause and Effect of the same thing, which is impossible.

*Obj. But how can Gods Fore-knowledge be called an Effect, which doth ever suppose*

an

*an antecedent Cauſe? For ſince you grant it to have been from Eternity, if it be an Effect, it muſt be an Eternal one, whoſe antecedent Cauſe muſt therefore be fetcht from beyond Eternity. Nor have you yet ſufficiently explained how far, or whether you admit there may be ſuch a thing, as fore-knowledge of what is already paſt, which was objected before.*

To this laſt part of the Objection I have already ſaid, if it be conſidered, what amounts to a ſufficient anſwer; but yet I ſhall endeavour to be a little plainer. *Firſt* then, that God did foreknow the things that are now paſt, as well as what are to come, is by no means to be doubted; but to ſay, that he doe's now foreknow what is already paſt, is Non-Senſe, becauſe it implies the futurity of what is elapſed: as if I ſhould ſay, God foreknows the Deluge, or the building of *Babel*; this would be contradiction in point of time, as though the things were yet to come, which are long ſince paſt; but it's proper to ſay, God did foreknow them.

But *ſecondly*, the Notion I aim at, will beſt be apprehended, by remembring alwayes to diſtinguiſh between the *real* and

and the *vertual* Exiſtence of things: the former is brought forth in time, and therefore I ſay, God did foreſee it from Eternity; but I cannot ſay ſo of the latter, which being it ſelf Eternal, can admit no priority in point of time. As for inſtance, 10000. years ago the World was not extant, and ſomething doubtleſs will be hereafter, which is not now; but there never was, nor ever will be any thing extant, but what is, or was, Virtually, exiſtant in God, and clearly viſible to his all-ſeeing Eye from all Eternity: therefore Gods Omniſcient View, or *Idea* of all things, being antecedent to the Creation, but ſubſequent in order of Nature to the Vertual Exiſtence of the World, is fore-knowledge with reſpect to the one; but Contemplation or Intuition in reſpect of the other. If we look forward to the Creation, it is Preſcience; but if we look back upon Eternity, it is the reſult of Divine Will and Power, or it is Gods beholding in himſelf the Platform of his Deſign, which (as I ſaid before) is an effect of the Divine Purpoſe, to build a world: which Pupoſe is the higheſt Link in the Chain of Cauſality, even as the firſt Step of *Solomon* towars

towards building of the Temple was this, [a] *Behold, I purpose to build an House unto the name of the Lord my God.* It is true, that God is infinite and Eternal in all his Attributes, and so there can be no precedence amongst them in order of time, yet in order of Nature there must be a Priority, since God cannot be said to behold a pure *Nothing*: to see, know, and behold, are Relative terms, and do ever suppose something to be seen, known, or beheld.

*Thirdly*, as for the other part of the objection, against an Eternal Effect, it will lie as hard against our blessed Saviour, who is the [b] *Eternal Son of God*, the *brightness of his Father's Glory*, the *Express Image of his Person*, and the *Effect of his Love to Mankind.* These also are Relative Terms: a Son supposes a Father: an Image, or Copy, supposes an Original, yet none surely doubts the Eternity of him, who *laid the foundations of the Earth, and whose Throne is forever and ever.*

I put the question even now, what the reason was that the *Astronomers* skill and Fore-knowledge of the *Celestial Phenomena*, had not the least influence to cause the

a) 1 King 5. 5. (b) Hebr. 1. v. 3. 8. 10.

the ſame, and I gave this anſwer, becauſe theſe *Phenomena* did depend upon certain Motions of the heavenly Bodies, which were regular, and had been from the beginning of the World; and ſo it was but enquiring into theſe Motions, and the fore-knowledge of Eclipſes, Conjunctions and the like, would follow by conſequence. Let it be now demanded, why Divine Preſcience had not any cauſality or influence upon the Creation, and I ſhall anſwer this queſtion juſt after the ſame manner, namely, becauſe the Creation did depend upon the Will and Purpoſe of God, which is the firſt Mover, the Fountain Cauſe of all things, and was from Eternity. Omnipotence it ſelf, and even infinite goodneſs, would ſeem barren and unfruitfull without a Will to act: for whatever God made in Wiſdom, and ruleth by his power, were wrought after the [a] *Counſel of his own Will*; nor is there any thing in Heaven or in Earth, that can preſcribe (in point of cauſality) unto the bleſſed Will of God. 'Tis no more then, but Gods beholding, or taking a View of his own Purpoſe, and the Fore-knowledge of

a) Eph. 1. 11.

of the future World must follow by consequence, which fore-knowledge is nothing else, but the Prospect of what was potentially existent in himself, from everlasting, as hath been said.

From the foregoing Discourse it may appear, that Divine Prescience, as such, cannot in propriety of speech be said to have created the World, nor to have had any efficacious influence thereupon: and if we consult the Scripture, we shall find the same yet more evident. There we find that God said, [a] *Let there be light, and there was light.* That, [b] *by the Word of the Lord were the Heavens made,* [c] *and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.* [d] That the *Worlds were framed by the Word of God.* [d] And that *he upholds all things by the word of his power.* Now whether we take the Word of God for his Power, or for his powerful Command, or for the manifestation of his Will (as it is frequently used in Scripture under these and sundry other acceptations) it will still come to the same thing, and what I am pleading for: but I do not observe it ever taken for Prescience,

a) Gen. 1. 3. (b) Psal. 33, 6. (d) Hebr. 11. 3. (c) Hebr. 1. 3.

ſcience, nor will the Bible (I think) afford an inſtance of any Cauſality aſcribed thereunto; but on the contrary, many Scriptures do clearly evince Divine Preſcience, and at the ſame time aſcribe the Events foreſeen, to other Cauſes, which muſt needs be very much to the matter in hand; I ſhall mention two or three.

*Firſt*, our Saviour Chriſt (as was noted before) is ſaid to know all things that ſhould come upon him: and yet his being delivered unto death by the *Jews*, is attributed to their ignorance; *for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.*

*Secondly*, in the 29th Chap. of *St. Luke's* Goſpel, [a] our Lord Chriſt foretold (and therefore certainly he foreknew it) that enemies *would caſt a Trench about Jeruſalem, that they would lay it even with the ground, and not leave one ſtone upon another.* Should Preſcience have theſe diſmal Effects, it might be thought to be a very malignant thing; and that which belongs to God as a Divine Perfection, could not be cleared from being the Cauſe of much evil. But let us not charge God fooliſhly, ſince

a) Verſe 43, 44.

ſince we are informed of the true cauſe in the very next words, namely, *Becauſe thou kneweſt not the time of thy viſitation.*

*Thirdly*, In the Prophecy of *Hoſea*, it is ſaid of *Iſrael*, *Ephraim* and *Iudah*, [a] *that they ſhall fall in their iniquity, and that they ſhall be as Chaff driven with the whirlwind out of the floor, and as ſmoke out of the Chimney.* Was this fore-knowledge the cauſe of that deſtruction? No; for it is preſently added: *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf.*

Again, the Prophet *Ezekiel* is commanded to ſay unto the Prince of *Tyrus*, [b] *That Strangers, the terrible of the Nations, ſhall draw their Sword againſt the beauty of thy Wiſdom, and they ſhall defile thy brightneſs, and bring thee down to the pit, &c.* And ſhall this come upon him becauſe God foreſaw it? No: but becauſe *thine heart was lifted up; and thou haſt ſaid, I am a God.*

*Laſtly*, to name no more, *St. Paul* exhorting [c] to ſtedfaſtneſs in the faith, foretells the *coming of the Man of Sin, which would be after the working of Satan, with all power and Signs, and lying wonders:*



a) Chap. 5. Chap. 13. (b) Ezek. 28. (c) 2 Theſſ. 2. 3.

that *there would be a falling away from the truth, and men ſhould believe lyes, that ſo they might be damned.* Now ſhould any man, to requite *St. Paul* for his care of the Church, as to lay the blame of all theſe ſad conſequences upon him, I know not whether would be greater, the folly or the wickedneſs of ſuch a Charge: and it would be yet worſe, to lay the fault upon the Spirit by which he ſpake, as coming near to blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt. But the Text carries the Cauſe along with the Effect, namely, [a] *becauſe they received not the love of the truth, that they might be ſaved; for this Cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſions, &c.* When truth has offered it ſelf by Miracles, and all poſſible demonſtrations, unto the minds of Men, and will not be received; it is a ſignal piece of Juſtice, to give them over to believe a lie. But here firſt the true *Phyſician* of a Chriſtian Soul admoniſheth it's ſafety and it's danger; it's ſafety, [b] *not to be ſoon ſhaken*; and it's danger of being *deceived.* Now, if the Soul reject both the *Phyſician* and his *Advice*, and having wilfully put it ſelf into the hands of a *Quack*, is

b) Vers 2, 3.

is destroy'd by him: nothing in the world can be more ridiculous, than to blame the timely warning and foresight of the good *Physician*.

*Obj.* But as concerning these and other Prophetick Scriptures, I meet with this *Salvo*, namely, *That whatever God foretells, he doth by his power inforce the accomplishment and fulfilling of the same. For* (say these persons) *tho' God knows all things knowable, yet such events as are contingent, or depend upon the fluctuating, and undetermin'd Will's of Men, are never knowable till they are brought to pass: and therefore God cannot foreknow them. But now, what God will have brought to pass, and whereof he gives Notice to the World by his Prophets, he doth bend and impel Mens Minds to do them, and by an irresistable influence bring them to effect.*

This Argument indeed strikes home; the only danger is, that it goes too far; and will prove what the Patrons of it seem highly to oppose. None can pretend a greater concern for the honour of God, than those that declaim against what they call *Horrendum Decretum*: yet this *Hypothesis* of theirs will force them to admit

the very ſame thing, and will make God the Author of ſin with a high hand. For, if in reference to all ſuch things as are foretold by Prophecy, there muſt not be admitted auy thing contingent, nor purely voluntary, as falls out in other affairs; but all ſuch Events are brought about by abſolute force; what is this but a fatal and inevitable Decree? And how can ſecond Cauſes fall under any blame, ſince they are infallibly predetermin'd by God's Almighty Power? Hence it will follow that the Jews and Roman Souldiers, were no more to be blamed for their Injuſtice and Cruelty to the bleſſed Jeſus, than a Watch is for going too faſt, when the Spring is ſet too high, or made too ſtrong for the Movement. And if the fault be not in ſecond Cauſes, it muſt of neceſſity lie upon the firſt.

It will be in vain to alledge, that they had been grievous Sinners formerly, and therefore God juſtly gave them up afterwards to hardneſs of heart. For, [a] *the Lamb was ſlain from the foundation of the World*, tho' not actually, yet ſo as to be the object of Divine Preſcience, unleſs you

a) Rev. 13. 8.

you will ſay, he was ſlain from the foundation of the World, and yet God knew not of it. It was then foreknown unto God. that the Lamb would be actually ſlain, before they that ſlew him had done good or evil. So that if God do inforce whatever he foreknows, then they who crucified our Saviour, were under a neceſſity of doing it, from the foundation of the World: and they who ſhall be ſeduced by Antichriſt to believe a Lie, and ſo be damned, have been about ſixteen hundred years under a fatal Decree of damnation. And even *Adam*, whom all men grant to have had free Will, muſt have been under a neceſſity of falling; unleſs we ſhall ſuppoſe, that when God foreordained his dear *Son* for a [a] *Sacrifice*, he did not know to what End. But the Lamb ſlain doth ſuppoſe ſin to be attoned, and that implies Sinners: Now there could not be Sinners, but ſome body muſt ſin firſt, and that being the firſt Man *Adam*, muſt (by this Argument) have ſinned, not out of choice, but unavoidable neceſſity, which is a moſt horrid and impious abſurdity.



a) 1 Pet. 1. 20.

Thus we have at hand three pregnant Inſtances, which do mightily expoſe the weakneſs of the objection: The *Sin* of *Adam*, the *Death* of *Chriſt*, and the *Deſtruction* of *Ieruſalem*. The *firſt* of theſe appears to have been certainly foreknown unto God, and yet none denies that *Adam* had power to have ſtood innocent. The *ſecond* was ſo particularly foretold by our Saviour himſelf, that the very perſons were pointed out, who where the chief Actors in it: yet *had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory.* The *third* likewiſe was largely and punctually prophecied; yet had [a] *Ieruſalem known in her day, the things which belonged to her peace*, Chriſt ſays, [b] *he would have gathered her Children together, as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her wings, but ſhe would not.* So that in theſe great Events, we may eaſily diſcern a reſerv'd condition, and an evident poſſibility of having been otherwiſe, tho' they were all known unto God from the foundation of the World. For in caſe of a right Judgement and information (poſſible enough to have been atttain'd) *Adam* had not *ſinned*, *Chriſt*

a) Mat. 23.36. (b) Luke 19.42.

*Christ* had not *suffered*, *Jerusalem* had not bin *ruin'd*. They were all indeed foreseen in their Causes, & those Causes were sure to produce their proper Effects so far as they were permitted; that is, God foresaw, that Men left to their liberties and their lusts, would make a false Estimate of things, and would be sure to act accordingly: but yet such foresight had no Causality upon such actions, as hath been said; nor could there be any inforcement from God upon such Events, whereby the Liberty of free agents was in the least diminished, if the Scriptures be admitted for truth.

But here I would not be misunderstood as if I thought God to be an unactive beholder of all those transactions which are foretold by Prophecy: Surely he is too much a Cause of all things, to be a *Nude Spectator* of any one Action; and certain Events I grant to have been as well predetermin'd as prophecy'd, of which I shall give instance presently. When God purposeth to have any thing brought about, he can easily set Agents awork and remove impediments: he can turn mens hearts like Rivers of Water, yet never so, as to put

any preternatural force upon the Will to do evil.

For the courſe of Divine Providence (tho' inviſible to us) I conceive to be ſo laid, and things dependent (by Gods diſpoſal) in ſuch a ſeries and Concatenation, that various Cauſes and Contingents ſhall concur to operate upon Mens faculties, in ſuch ſort, as to make them willing to act their parts (unknown oft-times unto themſelves) in order to effect the Almighty's Purpoſe. Upon which Account I am apt to believe, that even in reference to thoſe Events that are under a peremptory Decree, moſt of the Actors that bring them about, are as much free agents, as is the Husband-man in his choice of a fit ſeaſon to plow his ground. But however, the things I mainly inſiſt upon are theſe, that ſince men derive that ſtrength from God, by which they blaſpheme his Name, and violate his Laws, God muſt be the primary Cauſe of thoſe Actions, but not of the Will wherewith they are done. That he doth not enforce the Volitions unto Evil, and yet he fore-knows them. And that in divers inſtances it doth appear, that thoſe Events and Actions have been fore-

known

known unto God, of which the immediate inſtruments have been free and voluntary Agents, as hath already been made evident.

There is yet another part of the *Objection* to be conſidered, namely, *that future Contingents are not knowable*. I confeſs, they are inſcrutable to us, to whom they are contingent, but to God there can be no ſuch thing: for he that makes any thing contingent unto God, leaves him obnoxious to ſurprize and diſappointment, and conſequently under great difficulty of Governing the World. For the clearing of this point, let us lay down for a groundwork (what I hope is not denied by any that I am concerned with, namely) that God Almighty knows moſt perfectly all things preſent; and let us ſee whether this will not both infer the knowledge of things to come, and take away all contingency with reſpect unto God. And by the way, let us obſerve the knowledge of Mankind, which tho' very dim and imperfect, even in things now exiſtent, and before our eyes, yet extends in ſome degree to things both paſt and future. The Hiſtorian is acquainted with many revolutions of for-

mer Ages, and from a parity of reaſon may foreſee ſome that are to come. The Phyſician, that underſtands in any competent Meaſure the Nature of a Medicine, knows from whence it derives it's Original, what are it's conſtituent principles, and how it will operate. The Mechaniſt that underſtands an Engine, knows how it was made, the parts of which it is compoſed, and what feats it will perform. The Phyloſopher, that enquires into the reaſons of things and the Agency of bodies, with the various affections of Matter and Motion, can tell before hand the ſucceſs of divers Experiments and undertakings which are in the dark to other people. And the Aſtronomer can tell the future Appearances of Heaven, as was noted before. Now, if all this and much more, reſult from Mans imperfect knowledge of a few things, we muſt ſure conclude ſomething further from Gods moſt perfect knowledge of all things, eſpecially if we add hereunto, the conſideration of his Dominion and Soveraignty over all Creatures.

The World is a great *Machine* or Engine, which God made at firſt, and ſtill up-

upholds its Being and Motion by the Word of his power: Not so much as an Atome can stir, but by a Vertue derived from him. Shall we then think that the great Operator knows not the parts of [a] his own Work, or can be ignorant of its Motions, or of the influence that one part hath upon another? It is possible a Curious Artist may make a piece of Watch-work to represent all the visible Motions of the Heavens, and to measure out time to an incredible degree of exactness: The Maker of such a piece must needs know its Numbers, how long it will go, how one Motion depends upon another, and one wheel drives on another: nor can he be ignorant, that if he suffer the springs to run down, and wind them up no more, the Motions will cease, and his Contrivance will become altogether useless: Or if by any other means, he stop some of the Motions for a time, they cannot stir till he gives them liberty, tho' the rest are going in the mean while. Thus the Divine Architect, that framed the World, knows all it's parts and influences, all it's hidden springs of Motion, all the Causes



a) Act. 15. 18.

of every Effect, with their Connexion and dependence, and the Agency of every particle of matter throughout the Universe. He knows for what duration he design'd it's Motion and Existence, and the time when [a] Heaven and Earth shall pass away. Nor can he be ignorant, that if he withdraw the springs of life, his supporting providence from any Creature, or from the whole World, it must sink into a State of Inactivity or Annihilation. Now as it would be an idle fancy to think, that in such a Watch, there should start up some new Motion, not design'd and unexpected by the Maker: So is it far more extravagant to talk of any thing contingent in respect of God, in as much as his work is perfect, and he can command a punctual observance of those Laws and Rules which he himself hath given to the Creation, whilst [b] *Fire and Hail, Snow and Vapour, Stormy wind fulfil his Word.*

The Sum is this: God Almighty knows most perfectly all things present; that is, the hidden springs of Action, and all the latent causes now operating: the Nature and Vertues of all things in being, with

a) Mat. 24. 36. b) Psalm 148. 8.

with the utmoſt extent of their powers and influence, are all manifeſt in his ſight: but ſince natural things do not work in an inſtant, their force and efficacy muſt extend to future time, if I may not ſay, till time ſhall be no more; for one part of Matter will ſtill operate upon another, whilſt Sun and Moon indures. Now ſince God cannot know perfectly the force of any Agent; but (at the ſame time) he muſt know alſo the Effect it will have upon it's Patient; and how far again that Patient will become active upon other things: it will follow; that if God did not know things to come, he muſt of neceſſity be ignorant of a thouſand things preſent: for as the knowledge of cauſes implies the knowledge of effects; ſo doth the not knowing of effects unavoidably infer the ignorance of cauſes. And as he that draws one Link of an extended Chain, draws the whole, and the Motion of one of the Globuli, moves thoſe that are continguous, and thoſe again others indefinitely: So it is impoſſible to know any one thing perfectly without the knowledge of more; and God's moſt perfect knowledge of all things preſent, muſt imply the knowledge of all things future.

It may be ſaid, *That all this is true with reſpect unto inanimate Creatures, but Man acts from an internal principle, and being left to the Liberty of his Will, may either act or ſuſpend his action: and beſides, there are ſo many things may happen to influence his Will, that 'tis very uncertain whether of the two he will chooſe, until he have effectually choſen.*

Uncertain doubtleſs it is to other men, and oft-times to a Man's ſelf, what he will do in ſome caſes: but unto God it cannot be ſo, for theſe two reaſons eſpecially.

*Firſt*, The *Heart* indeed is ſo *deceitful*, that for a Man to *find out the ſubtilties of his own* [a] is no eaſy diſquiſition; and it muſt be yet harder to know another man's. But [b] *God ſees not as Man ſees*; he not only looks upon the heart, but he looks into it; [c] *He ſearches and tries it? He knows the moſt intimate Secrets of the Soul, and is a diſcerner of thoughts and intents; all Creatures are manifeſt in his ſight; all naked and open before his Eyes.* It is impoſſible then they ſhould deceive him, or act beyond or contrary to his Expectation. For ſince words and actions flow (as ſtreams from a fountain)

a) Jer. 17. 9, 10. (b) 1 Sam. 16. 7. (c) Heb. 4. 12, 13.

tain) out of the abundance of the heart, it would be ſtrange that God ſhould know ſo exactly what the Fountain contains, and yet be ignorant what Streams muſt iſſue thence.

*Secondly*, Since the principles from whence all human actions do proceed, may be reduced to two, namely, thoſe of *Nature* and *Grace*, and God muſt know the Efficacy of them both, in as much as the one proceeds from the work of his hands, and the other from the operation of his Spirit: it muſt follow, that God cannot be ignorant how far Truth or Errour, Vertue or Vice, Equity or Injuſtice, Reaſon or Fallacy, Religion or Intereſt will prevail upon any man, either in his Natural Capacity, or under ſuch a Meaſure of Grace as he purpoſeth to beſtow upon him. For as he knows the force of natural Agents, and the diſpoſition of every Patient to receive, or to repel their agency: ſo can he not be ignorant of the Efficacy of that Vertue, which proceeds more immediately from himſelf. All which amounts to thus much in ſhort, that God Almighty is the fountaine Cauſe and Soveraign Ruler of all things, both in the

King-

Kingdom of Nature and that of Grace, and therefore muſt know the whole Series of Cauſality from the beginning to the End. And ſince that which is an effect of one thing, becomes the cauſe of another, he muſt equally know the things to come as thoſe preſent; unleſs there be ſome effects, which proceed not from any cauſe at all.

Let us now conſider the Nature of a Contingent, and what it is that ſhould make men think it cannot be foreknown. A Contingent (beſides the ſtricter notion, as it ſignifies the effect of a voluntary cauſe) may be, as I apprehend, more ſtrictly taken, for the encountring, or meeting together of Sundry Effects, whoſe Cauſes do not appear to have had any connexion. As when a Spring-tyde, a Land-flood and a Storm from the Sea, happening at once, do make an inundation. Or when a Traveller in his Journey meets with a ſhower. Or two Friends ſetting out from ſundry Ports, meet in a far Country, without deſigning it, or knowing one of another. Now a high wind and a Spring Tide, a Journey and a Shower, have each of them Cauſes

Cauſes ſufficient to produce them, but they are contingent each to other, as alſo in reſpect of us, who not knowing that ſuch cauſes were operating, could not foreſee the effects. But the caſe is not ſo with God: it is not yet come to that paſs, that becauſe men cannot foreſee contingent Events, that therefore we muſt conclude, God cannot do it neither. For as Wind and Weather are in his hands, and obey his Will, ſo Voluntary good actions flow originally from the Holy Spirit, and evil actions are permitted, as the Devils were to enter into the Swine: Nor can wicked Agents go one hair's breadth beyond their appointed limits. And even permiſſion it ſelf doth imply fore-knowledge; for how can any one be ſaid to have permitted what he knew not of before it was done? I hope, that to evade this argument there's none will ſay, that God gives to wicked men a general Licence to do what they pleaſe, whilſt he in the mean-time knows not in particular, what wickedneſs they will commit until they have acted it. For beſides, that this Character is exactly ſuited unto Satan in his Kingdom of darkneſs, it deſtroys Divine Providence root and branch:

branch: for how can God limit, or overrule to his own good ends and Purpoſes, thoſe events whereof he hath no particular foreſight? or how can he be ſaid in ſuch a caſe to govern the World at all?

But as concerning the Nature of a Voluntary action, I have ſpoken before; I ſhall only add in this place, that ſince God knows moſt perfectly the heart of Man, and what cauſes are intereſted in forming of his Judgement; how far the Will follows the dictate of the underſtanding, and of right Reaſon, or whether it be captivated by Senſual Appetite, and by the luſts that War in his Members: Since God (I ſay) doth infallibly know the ſprings of all actions, whether from ſenſe, from Reaſon or from Grace, and to what degrees any kind of external or internal force can bend thoſe ſprings; he muſt of neceſſity know what Man (purely left to his own faculties) will do upon any occaſion.

I have inſiſted longer upon this *Objection*, as alſo upon the *Non-cauſality of Divine Preſcience*, than ſome perhaps will think to have been neceſſary: but becauſe the ſenſe

ſenſe of the *Objection*, is ſaid to come from perſons of very great learning and reaſon, and I did my ſelf hear it ſtrongly urged, *that Preſcience muſt needs cauſe the things foreſeen*; I thought it not amiſs to enlarge a little upon both the points, in order to clear them up to common underſtanding: but whether I have done it to ſatisfaction, I muſt leave to the Reader's judgement. The ſum of what I have ſaid in reference to this laſt mentioned (which I diſcourſed of before) is this, that to affirm Divine Prefcience to have a Cauſality, in ſuch ſort, that the Events foreſeen could not poſſibly have fallen out otherwiſe, is abſurd, and it is falſe; it is abſurd becauſe it puts the Cart before the Horſe, and makes that to be a cauſe which is purely an effect: and it is falſe, becauſe it is contrary to the word of truth, contained in the Scriptures. I ſhall now conclude this part of my Eſſay, with the words of the Schoolman; [a] *Neque hinc etiam fit, ut per hanc Preſcentiam, Deus imponat neceſſitatem aliquam rebus ſic cognitis, quia hæc Scientia, ut ſic, non eſt earum cauſa.*

a Suarez.

But

But before I come to the laſt part of my Deſign, I muſt make a ſhort digreſſion, to prevent an *objection* that may ariſe from what I ſaid not long ago, namely, *That the Divine Will was the fountain Cauſe of all things, as being the firſt Mover; for no doubt God is the firſt cauſe of all Motion, tho' he never determines any, exerted by a free Agent to a wrong Object; and all things being wrought* (as the Apoſtle ſays) *after the Counſell of his Will.* From hence it may be urged, *that tho Divine Preſcience have no Cauſality: yet ſince we grant that the Divine Will is the firſt cauſe of all things, nor can we deny, that whatever God Wills, he certainly foreſees; doth it not follow from hence, that all things muſt come to paſs according to the fixed Purpoſe and Preordination of God, in ſuch ſort, that the Will of Man muſt needs be over-rul'd and predetermin'd, and conſequently the free agency of rational Creatures, wholly evacuated?*

I anſwer, this will by no means follow, as may appear from the conſideration of the following particulars.

1. Though God foreſees whatever he will

will have brought to effect, yet we cannot ſay on the contrary, that he wills every thing he foreſees. God, 'tis true, wills even the ſinfull actions, which he foreſees, but with a will permiſſive of them, not effective; perfectly knowing (as a Wiſe Man would ſhreudly gueſs) what Perſons, ſo and ſo inclined, will do in ſuch and ſuch Circumſtances, being only inabled, not impelled, to act, and being left to follow their own Inclinations. And ſo he may certainly foreſee many things, which he never wills by a poſitive and effectively determinative will. He equally foreſees all things that come to paſs, otherwiſe he would be deficient in point of knowledge: but we muſt not ſay, he wills them equally. For that would be to approve of evil, and ſo he would be deficient in point of goodneſs. For inſtance, he predetermin'd Iſraels deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and he likewiſe foretold it: So that herein his purpoſe and foreſight run parallel. But then he foretold *Pharaohs* obſtinacy in detaining the people, at the ſame time when he will'd him to let them go: and herein his foreſight and expreſs

preſs will are quite contrary. He wills, that *men should fear the Lord, and ſerve him in ſincerity and in truth*; and not only ſo, but that they ſhould do it out of [a] *free choice*, ariſing from a true Judgment of things: yet he foreknows, that ſome will be *diſobedient*, and *iniquity ſhall abound*. [b] He wills, that his *choſen people be with him, and ſee his Glory* [c], and he knows it ſhall be ſo: he knows that others will *die in their ſins*, but he hath ſworn *he wills it not*. [d] Whatever God hath preordain'd is an undoubted object of Divine Preſcience: but every object of Divine Preſcience is not therefore preordain'd, nor agreeable to his Will. Good things are equally the objects of Divine pleaſure and foreſight; but we cannot ſay the like of evil. We may ſay indeed, that God foreſees an evil action, but we cannot ſay he would have it done, nor that he hath power to do it; for both theſe would imply a contradiction, ſince 'tis purely inconſiſtent with the Divine Nature to have either Will or Power to do evil.

A

a) Joſh. 24. 14, 15. b Mat. 24. 12. c Jo. 17. 24. d Mat. 19. 28.

A *ſecond* conſideration is this, That tho the Divine Will be truly and unchangeably one and the ſame, yet is it diſtinguiſhable according to a threefold difference of things about which it is converſant. As *firſt*, when God deſigns to bring about ſome ſpecial Act of his providence in the World, as that promiſe made to *Abraham*, [a] *Unto thy ſeed will I give this Land*: in this reſpect his will is poſitive and irreſiſtable, nor can all the powers of Earth and Hell put one Minutes ſtop unto his purpoſe or decree.

But *ſecondly*, when God commands any thing to be done by his people, as their duty and for their good, he deals not with them as inanimate Creatures, but as rational ones: he propoſes unto them a Rule or Law, with the benefit of obſerving it; as for example, *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long in the Land, &c.* But he doth not inforce the obſervation of this Law upon all thoſe to whom it is given: for ſo there would be no tranſgreſſion. He propounds it to their choiſe, expecting a voluntary obedience upon promiſe of a reward, which re-

a) Gen. 12. 7.

reward cannot be commenſurate to an obedience upon force, which properly is no obedience at all. In this ſenſe therefore his Will is Imperative, but not irreſiſtable; for the *ſtiff-necked* are ſaid to *reſiſt the holy Ghoſt*.[a]

And *Thirdly*, when God forbids any thing to be done by us, that would diſhonour him and deſtroy our ſelves, and yet we do it; or when he commands us any thing, wherein we diſobey him, his Will is therein only permiſſive. Thus ſin, tho' directly oppoſite to the command, is permitted. And ſo God is ſaid to have *ſuffered the peoples manners in the wilderneſs about forty years*,[a] as alſo *in times paſt, he ſuffered all Nations to walk in their own ways*.[b] Not that their ways were acceptable to him, or agreeable to his Will (in any other ſenſe but that of permiſſion) much leſs, efficaciouſly influenced by him; only they were ſuffered for a time to run their Courſe. For, having ſet before them life and death, partly in his written Law, and partly in their own conſciences, and having imploy'd all ſuitable means, motive and rea-

a) Act. 7. 51. b] Act. 13. 16. c] Act. 14. 16.

reaſonable inducements for their chooſing of the one, and refuſing the other, according to his primary intention of doing good unto all men: if nothing leſs than invincible grace will ſerve the turn, God is not obliged to ſave all thoſe as it were by miracle, that will not otherwiſe be ſaved; and therefore, permitting obſtinate perſons to reap the fruits of their own works, his ſecondary intention takes place, namely, the manifeſtation of his power, righteouſneſs, and juſt ſeverity upon impenitent ſinners, whereby alſo the pretiouſneſs of grace and mercy is the more conſpicuous to thoſe that receive it.

Now, tho' I like not by any means, that diſtinction of the Divine Will into Secret and Revealed, eſpecially when theſe two are made to contradict each other; as if it were God's Secret Will that men ſhould ſin and be damned, when his revealed Will bids them repent and be ſaved: this is to ſtem the Current of Scripture, and in effect to make void both the Law and Goſpel. I ſay, tho' I approve not this, nor ſhall I borrow any of the School Diſtinctions; yet I think the

Scripture will allow us to ſay, that the Divine Will is either Poſitive, Preceptive, or Permiſſive. By Poſitive I mean irreſiſtable, in reference to what God does himſelf, or what he poſitively determines to be done; Preceptive is with reſpect unto Laws, and Mens voluntary obedience thereunto; Permiſſive in reſpect of Sin. And yet this is ſtill the ſame moſt bleſſed and unchangeable Will, as it is the ſame Sun beams by which one ſort of bodies is hardned, another melted, and a third calcin'd.

I come now to the laſt part of my undertaking, which is, to anſwer ſome of thoſe *Objections*, that are wont to puzle divers people about this matter: but I have anſwered ſo many already, that have riſen by the way, and have enlarged beyond my expectation in what is paſt, that I would think, it ſhould ſpare me ſome pains in the remainder. For the ſtrength of what now remains, may be ſumm'd up in a very few *Objections*, and anſwered (I hope) in not many words.

It is matter of eaſy obſervation, that the Objectors do ſtill ſuppoſe the thing in que-

queſtion, and what ought to be proved before the Objections can have any force at all: as namely, that God's Fore-knowledge of the End makes void the uſe of Means; whereas it is ſo far from doing that, that the uſe of Means and ſecond Cauſes is therein ſuppoſed and imply'd, as the Foundation of ſuch Fore-knowledge. For if it were poſſible, that the force and efficacy of cauſes could be uncertain unto God, the foreſight of Effects would be ſo too. Thus, for example, if God foreſee that ſuch a Child ſhall live to be a Man of Eminent learning; doth this fore-ſight give him leave to be idle, and become a Truant every day? Now the Objectors, according to their manner of arguing, muſt anſwer in the affirmative, and leave the Child to be made a Scholar by miracle. But I anſwer, No; for ſuch fore-ſight muſt have ſome foundation; it doth therefore ſuppoſe, that God for his part, by his daily providence, will continue unto him a competent Meaſure of health, ſtrength and capacity, and afford him fit means and opportunities of becoming learned: and that the boy for his part, will ſtudiouſly imploy and improve

the ſame for the beſt advantage to that End. Let us now ſee the full ſtrength of what is wont to be objected in this matter.

Obj. *If God's Fore-knowledge doth aſcertain the End, to what purpoſe is the uſe of Means? An Event can be no more than certain: and if God foreſees, that I ſhall certainly dye within a year, all the Medicines in the World will not make me live a day longer. But if he foreſees, I ſhall live twenty years, I ſhall not only need no Phyſick, but I may, for diverſion, leap once a day into a River, or into the Ocean, without any fear of drowning. I can neither fall ſhort of, nor go beyond that fatal Period, which is fixed in Divine Preſcience.*

This *Objection* ſeems to make ſome little noiſe, and yet at moſt, is but a plauſible kind of fallacy, imploy'd only by vulgar and unthinking heads, but unworthy a man of good conſideration. It is indeed anſwered in what hath been already ſaid; but I ſhall add ſomething more in theſe few particulars. As *firſt*,

I. This ſort of reaſonning reſembles ſo much that of the Devil to our Saviour, that it may very well ſeem to challenge the

the ſame Author. If God foreſees, thou ſhalt live many years, thou may'ſt leap into the Sea, or throw thy ſelf down from a Precipice (ſays the Objection) for thou muſt certainly live out thy appointed time [a] *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down from this pinnacle of the Temple,* (ſays the Devil) *for he ſhall give his Angels charge concerning thee.* [b] Now, as the ground of that ſecurity againſt dangers, and ſundry Evils mentioned, in the 91. Pſalm, at verſ. 8. is omitted in the Devils quotation: So the ground of Gods foreſight, and cauſe of the Event foreſeen, is omitted in the *Objection*, namely, a prudent care to preſerve life. And as the Son of God was never like to fall down and worſhip the Devil; ſo any ſober Man, that lives to a full age, is not like to attempt deſperate ways to deſtroy himſelf. The anſwer too, given by our Saviour, is proper in this Caſe; [c] *Thou ſhalt not tempt the Lord thy God:* For, if he foreſees the End, he foreſees alſo the Means conducing thereunto, which means God having gratiouſly put into thine own hands, why ſhouldſt thou tempt him to ſave thy life by



a) Mat. 4. 6. (b) Pſal. 91. 8. (c) verſ. 7.

miracle, when thou maiſt preſerve it by thy own diſcretion? Thus we ſee, the Devils argument, and that of the Objection, run exactly parallel.

*Secondly*, the fallacy of this reaſoning conſiſts partly in joyning a truth and a falſity together, and making the one to infer the other, tho' there be no connexion between them: and partly in leaving out the conſideration of that which muſt be ſuppos'd, to make the ſenſe compleat, whether the inference be true or falſe; For inſtance, let this be the argument in ſhort:

*God foreſees the End; therefore it will ſo come to paſs.*

I ſay here, the Propoſition is true, but the inference (without ſomething elſe ſuppoſed) is falſe: for if the illative particle *therefore*, refer only to the word *fore-ſees*, there is no good conſequence, ſince foreſight hath not any Cauſality, as hath (I hope) been proved. That Divine Preſcience doth aſcertain the End, is true upon this Account, [a] that it beholds the Cauſes

(a) Neceſſitas conſequentiæ in ordine probandi, non eſt neceſſitas rei ipſius in ordine cauſandi, Baxt. Meth. part. 1. pag. 45.

ſes wherein the certainty doth conſiſt: but that it doth ſo meerly of it ſelf, without ſuppoſition of cauſes, and proper Means to effect that End, is falſe. God, by his fore-ſight, lays no neceſſity upon the Event: but he fore-ſees it in its Cauſes, of which humane Endeavours ordinarily are no ſmall part. Therefore the ſenſe of the Argument muſt, in this manner, be compleated, before it can be made to conlude any thing.

*God fore-ſees the cauſes productive of ſuch Effects; therefore ſuch Effects will follow; not from the fore-ſight, but from the cauſes foreſeen.*

*Thirdly*, Let us ſuppoſe, that God foreſees, ſome ſtrong Man, vigorous and healthful, ſhall die within a year, who according to the Courſe of Nature might live twenty. If this be true, it muſt be true alſo, that intemperance, neglect of means, or the like, muſt bring him to it: Some cauſe there muſt be; but naked foreſight is no cauſe at all. Again, ſuppoſe God foreſees, that ſuch a perſon will live twenty years. If that be true, then, that

he ſhould attempt every day to deſtroy himſelf, muſt be falſe: for if God foreſees the one, he foreſees not the other, becauſe they are inconſiſtent. He doth not foreſee contradictions to be true, or things to be that will never be; as once a wiſe Critick would needs maintain, that when *Jonah* was ſent to preach unto *Nineveh*, God then foreſaw, that City would be deſtroy'd in forty days, though it ſtood many years after. But God doth not foreſee that Cauſes will produce ſuch Effects as are improper and impoſſible: not that repentance will produce deſtruction; not that poiſon, drowning or debauchery will produce length of days; and vertuous prudence an untimely End. In a word, Divine Preſcience beholds not things in parcels, but altogether in one View: Sees the iſſues and periods of all things, not without, but in conjunction with the proper cauſes conducible thereunto.

*Fourthly*, It may not be amiſs to remember, that as there are ſome true Propoſitions, which by leaving out a word or two may be made falſe: So there are others (and thoſe of Divine Authority) which without ſomething underſtood, cannot be made

made out to be true. Of the first sort is this, [a] *My doctrine is not mine*; and again, *He that believeth on me, believeth not on me.* But this is the Devil's way of quoting Scripture, leaving out the Context that should explain it: and in this manner too frequently do some persons deal with those Writings, they have a mind to cavil at. Of the other sort is this, [b] *Yet fourty days and* Nineveh *shall be overthrown*; And [c] *Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God?* Now the Divine purpose for the destruction of that City, and for excluding [d] Fornicators, Idolaters, Thieves, Drunkards, Extortioners, and the like, out of the Kingdom of Heaven, is denounced absolutely without any annexed Condition: and yet all acknowledge, that such threatnings are conditionally to be understood, and to be executed only in case of impenitency: And thus it is in our present case. That God fore-sees the End, is true; but it is not the whole truth, nor to be understood exclusive of the Means. It is undoubtedly true, that Christ fore-saw the destruction



a) Jo. 7. 16. Jo. 12. 44. (b) Jonah 3. 4 (c) 1 Cor. 6. 9. (d) Vers 10.

of *Jeruſalem*: yet we muſt not thence infer, that he fore-ſaw it without any reſpect to Sin; for thus he complains: *How often would I have gathered your children together*, &c. *and ye would not*! How could it be matter of complaint that they would not, if the peoples choice be not imply'd? Either God fore-ſees, that men will abuſe their Liberty, or he doth not; if not, then neither is he omniſcient, nor are the Scriptures true; if he doth, then ſuch fore-ſight is ſo far from taking away mens Liberty, that it confirms it; for men cannot abuſe their Liberty unleſs they have it; nor can they uſe it, if the objection have any force; which ſuppoſeth mens endeavours, and the uſe of Means to be in vain. Thus then I ſum up what hath been ſaid in anſwer to the *Objection*.

[a] *God that made the World and all things therein, ſeeing he is Lord of Heaven and Earth, and giveth unto all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all Nations of men, to dwell upon the Earth, and determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation.* We ought not to think, that the Godhead is like

a) Act. 17, 24, 25, 26.

like unto Stones, or ſtupid Earth, that he ſhould be ignorant either of his own offſpring, or of the work of his hands, or the bounty of his goodneſs. And having gratiouſly endued Mankind with the light of knowledge, and with a faculty of chooſing things for his good, and avoiding things hurtful: he doth not extinguiſh that light, nor take away ſuch power of Election, unleſs it be, as a puniſhment for ſome grievous and long-continued provocation. But foraſmuch as he beholds at once in his Omniſciency, the Nature, Vertue and Activity of all Creatures, with the Cauſes, Events and Iſſues of all Things and Actions, from Everlaſting to Everlaſting; and ſince he knows moſt perfectly the heart of Man, and the bent of his affections, his meaſure of Grace, and prevailing motives: he muſt of neceſſity foreknow the various Reſults of Mans choice and Liberty of Will, without the leaſt obſtruction to the free Courſe and Exerciſe thereof. He foreſees the End, together with the Means, and the Effect depending on it's proper Cauſe. He foreſees, that ſome men ſhall not live out a *half*



a) Pſal. 55. 23.

*their days*; but they are such as are bloody and deceitful. He fore-sees, that [a] *the years of the wicked shall be shortned*; but then he shall fall by his own wickedness. And to conclude, he fore-sees, that a [b] *righteous Man shall prolong his days*; not by daily attempts to destroy himself, but (as the Wise man saith) *by the fear of the Lord, and in the way of righteousness.*

*Obj.* One *Objection* more, & I have done. *It hath been often said in this Discourse, that the Event fore-seen of God, is certain, and will come to pass; and again, it hath been asserted, that some Events, which have been fore-seen, might possibly not have come to pass: how can these two Notions agree together?*

I answer, *first*, that any thing can be certain and uncertain at the same time, and in the same respects, is granted to be a contradiction: but a thing barely possible, which may either be, or not be, implies no contradiction at all. For as there are many things possible to be, which shall never come to pass actually; so other things shall actually come to pass, which yet possibly might not be. Thus it is possible

a) Prov. 10. 27. (b) Prov. 11. 30.

ſible, I may go to *Rome*; but 'tis a thouſand to one, I ſhall never come there; and if it actually ſo fall out, yet that does not take away the poſſibility of going thither: for learned men ſay, [a] *Multa futura eſſe quæ non erunt, & multa poſſe fieri quæ non fient.* On the other hand, ſomething will actually (that is certainly) be done this day, which poſſibly might be deferr'd till to morrow: *Illud enim poſſibile eſt, quo poſito nullum ſequitur inconveniens.* But all this perhaps will better appear from the conſideration of theſe particulars.

1. An Event may be certain with reſpect unto God which is not ſo to us: for nothing can be uncertain to him that is omniſcient; but to us, that know but in part, almoſt every thing future is obſcur'd with ſome kind of uncertainty.

2. An Event may be certain in it ſelf, on Suppoſition of certain cauſes; and yet ſuppoſing other cauſes, it would fall out quite otherwiſe. So that

3. The certainty of a future Event is abſolute in reſpect of God, Hypothetical in reſpect of it ſelf, but unknown or uncertain in reſpect of us. That is to ſay, it



a) White de Mundo.

can never ſo fall out, but that he who knows the whole train of cauſes leading to it, muſt of neceſſity fore-know it. But it is the Cauſes (not the Fore-knowledge) which make it to be what it is; which being ſuppoſed, the Effect certainly follows. Which certainty extends not to us, who are ignorant of the Cauſes. Let us ſee now, how this will appear by inſtances.

Suppoſe, the *French* King, before he die, turns *Proteſtant*: whether it ſo fall out or not, God knows; for (as *Solomon* ſaith) [a] *the Kings heart is in the hand of the Lord.* If Conviction or Intereſt oblige him to become a *Proteſtant*, the Effect will certainly follow; but this is Hypothetical: that is, upon Suppoſition of prevailing Cauſes and Motives it muſt follow. But to us there can be nothing of certainty, whilſt we are ignorant of that Princes intentions, neither know how it may pleaſe God to work upon him hereafter.

The Captivity of the *Jews* was certainly fore-known unto God, and together with a great peſtilence foretold by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, in a very remarkable and particular manner: And afterwards, ſaith

a) Prov. 21. 1.

ſaith the Lord, [a] *I will deliver* Zedekiah *King of* Judah, *and his Servants, and the People, and ſuch as are left in this City, from the Peſtilence, from the Sword, and from the famine, into the hand of* Nebuchadnezzar *King of* Babylon, *and into the hand of their enemies, &c.* And he adds further, *that their City ſhall be given into the hand of the King of* Babylon, *and he ſhall burn it with fire.* Yet the ſame Prophet is ſent to call them to repentance, to prevent even this very Captivity, and tells them, [b] *If ye throughly amend your wayes and your doings; if ye throughly execute Judgment between a Man and his Neighbour; if ye oppreſs not the Stranger, the fatherleſs and the Widow, and ſhed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other Gods to your hurt: then will I cauſe you to dwell in this place, in the Land that I gave to your Fathers, for ever and ever.* We ſee here a reſerved condition, and a fair poſſibility of preventing that Eminent Captivity, ſo much noted in Scripture, and ſo much propheſied. God grant that we, by the ſame Method, may earneſtly endeavour to prevent another Captivity, which

a) Jer. 21. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. (b) Jer. 7. 5, 6, 7.

which has (they ſay) been propheſied too, and which ſeverely threatens *England* at this day.

I conclude with *Adam's* tranſgreſſion, before-mentioned, which was moſt certainly foreknown unto God, foraſmuch as [a] *redemption by the precious blood of Chriſt was fore ordained before the foundation of the World*; and 'tis noleſs certain, that *Adam* had free Will, and power to have perſiſted innocent, which ſurely amounts, at leaſt, to a poſſibility of not tranſgreſſing the Divine command. And this conſideration alone is enough to anſwer the Objection, and to ſilence any Argument that can be oppoſed in this matter.

I have now done; the uſes I propound to my ſelf from this Diſcourſe (for I preſume not to think it uſeful to others) are ſpecially theſe four: 1. To read the Scriptures impartially, and to value them equally, upon the Account of that Sacred Authority ſtampt upon the whole, and the Spirit that breaths in every part: not to build an Hypotheſis upon ſome few ſingle expreſſions, further than it may appear, to

a) 1 Pet. 1. 20.

to be conſentaneous to the integral body of truth contained therein. 2. In all myſterious points, wherein there appears a difficulty, either to affirm or deny, ſtill to adhere to that ſide which hath the ſurer evidence; and wherein the Word of God is clear and unqueſtionable, to eſteem that the ſtrongeſt evidence of all; and unto which all arguments from humane reaſon, and even Mathematical Demonſtration, muſt yield ſubmiſſion. 3. But in ſuch matters, wherein there appears equal danger in both extreams, and wherein many perſons have err'd on either hand; to take the middle way, and walk in it, with ſuch Caution and moderation, as to be friends with them that tread not the very ſame ſteps, and always ready to admit any further diſcovery of truth. 4. To repreſent the Ever-bleſſed God, in the beſt manner that may be thought, and moſt worthy of ſo glorious a Being, cloathed with all perfection, beauty and amiableneſs: not to render him monſtrous, like armed power without benignity, nor contemptible as an ignorant or defective Deity; but eſpecially to think of him according to the Notices he has given of him-

himself in his revealed Will; and not to imagine, that either his Essence, or many times, his operations can stoop to my little understanding.

And if I were fit to give advice to others, it should be this, that no man presume to demolish the Divine Attributes, and out of the ruins thereof, to erect unto himself some groundless fancy, which like a Castle in the Air, hath nothing solid to support it: as if God could not be just to his Creatures without being imperfect in himself. Neither let any man stand dismayed at the consideration of the fatal Period; as if God could not foreknow the Events of things, but either Divine Justice must be arraign'd, or Man degraded to a Machine: for as he that doth righteousness, is righteous, and by perseverance therein shall undoubtedly be happy; so he that wilfully persisteth in evil doing, is wicked, and without repentance, must expect to be miserable. But as the former of these will never look upon Divine Prescience as the Cause of his happiness; so neither can the latter blame it, as any occasion of his misery.

Let

Let no man think to arreſt Judgement, by abſurdly charging his own prevarications upon Divine perfection: as if a Man ſhould urge, that becauſe God is perfect in all his Attributes, he was therefore obliged to be wicked in all his actions: Who would not bluſh at the impudence and abſurdity of ſuch a Plea? Preſcience is a perfection which God cannot want and preſerve his Divinity; but to make it a Cauſe of Mans miſery, were to make it an imperfection. It is no leſs eſſential to the Divine Nature than Omnipreſence: and thoſe that will dare to retort their wickedneſs upon God, may make this Attribute as Criminal as the other. For if men will not truſt God with the Fore-knowledge of evil Actions, leſt that ſhould infer a Neceſſity of ſinning, the next thing (and with equal reaſon) will be to ſeclude Divine Preſence from the inſpection of wickedneſs, leſt God ſhould that way become acceſſary thereunto. If a naked fore-knowledge of evil, be any cauſe of it, why not actual preſence at the evil committed?

But

But the Scripture doth better inform us, concerning the Cauſes of good and evil, and of mans happineſs and infelicity, than the ſhallow reaſonnings of ſome perſons, who yet pretend to be wiſe above others. There we are taught, that Man's happineſs depends upon the Grace of God in Chriſt Jeſus, freely offered to reaſonable Creatures, and willingly accepted by them. That the Soul, not by any blind fatality, but by rational inducements and the uſe of proper Means, being convinced of the Evil and Danger of Sin, and directed the way to Salvation, is brought to ſuch a belief of the Goſpel, and ſuch a voluntary obedience thereunto, as may render the perſon acceptable with God through the merits of our bleſſed Saviour; [a] *in whom we have redemption through his Bloud, the foregiveneſs of our ſins, according to the riches of his Grace.*

And then, the Cauſe of Man's Sin and Miſery doth conſiſt, not in Divine Preſcience, but in the prevalency of corruption and temptation, ariſing partly from an Original Taint, and partly from a wil-

ful

a) Eph. 1. 7.

ful purſuit of irregular Appetite after the Pleaſures of ſenſe: by which means, the affections being beſotted, and the heart hardened againſt reaſons without and Motions within, there is at laſt an inveterate and habitual malignity brought upon the Soul. [a] *But let no man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own luſt and enticed.*

Theſe are ſuch Cauſes of good and evil, that a diligent obſerver may eaſily ſee and feel their Efficacy: but how a naked Preſcience ſhould operate, what others do, I know not. I can by no means underſtand. But this I conclude for certain, that God is righteous in all his wayes, both with reſpect unto the Cauſes of Good and Evil, and their rewards or conſequents. His Judgements will one day appear to be according to Truth, without the leaſt diminution of his other perfections; namely, [b] *Unto them that are contentious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs, indignation and wrath: but to them who*

[a] James i. 13, 14. (b) Rom. ii. 8.

*who by patient continuance in well doing, seek for Glory and Honour and Immortality, Eternal Life.*

THE END.